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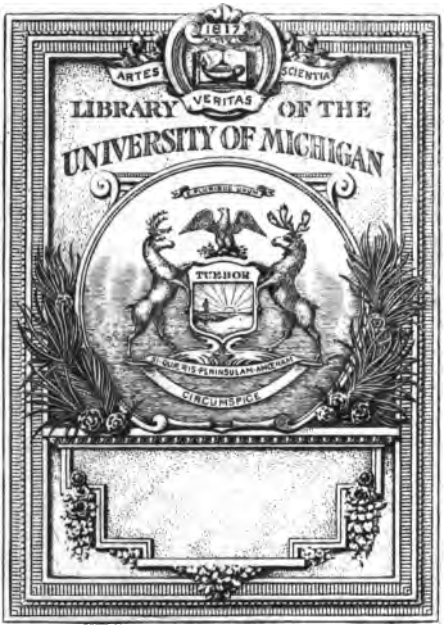
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MEMOIRS

OF

MARY,

A

NOVEL.

By (*Mrs.*) GUNNING.

IN FIVE VOLUMES.

VOL. IV.

THIRD EDITION.

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MEMOIRS

OF

MARY.

[*In Continuation.*]

FOR the firſt ten minutes nothing could equal the vivacity of Lord Auberry, after which exertion he fell into a kind of dead-alive ſtupor, ſomething between a waking and ſleeping reverie, from which he was diſturbed by Mrs. Tovee.

She cried out in her uſual quick tone of voice, "Is not this charming? quite "charming my Lord? did you ever ſee "any thing ſo handſome as your Couſin?

" and then my Lord Duke and my Lady
" Ducheſs are ſo fond of her—Well, to
" be ſure, it is quite delightful!"

" Every thing is charming! quite de-
" lightful, as you ſay, Madam."

" Well but my Lord, pray obſerve
" Mr. Lexington."—My Lord had juſt ſwallowed a glaſs of wine, and ſeemed inclined to doſe again.

" You muſt indeed look at Mr. Lex-
" ington; did you ever ſee any thing ſo
" handſome? my ſon and daughter were
" juſt ſuch another couple. Well! to be
" ſure, there never was ſo fine a family
" as my Lord and my Lady have got.
" And then they are all ſo wiſe, quite
" little philoſophers: and I hope, my
" Lord, the Houſe of Cleveland will not
" want a race of beautiful ſucceſſors.
" Well! to be ſure, that would be a great
" pity."

" Excuſe me, Madam, if I do not
" anſwer every one of your queſtions with
" the ſame regularity as you aſk them;

" my

" my talents for converſation were dipped
" ſo deep laſt night in claret, that I have
" not yet been able to redeem them."

" It is better your talents ſhould be
" dipped, than your eſtate (ſaid Mrs.
" Oxburn), hard will it be indeed if you
" have not yet enough left unmortgaged
" to entertain good Mrs. Tovee."

Good Mrs. Tovee did not hear the compliment intended for her, becauſe ſhe was charming, charming it away, to every other perſon who ſat within the reach of her voice.

Lord Auberry, rouſed by the rebuke of Mrs. Oxburn, who it was not for the intereſt of his plans or his pleaſure to offend, reaſſumed his vivacity, and again plied her with thoſe devoirs which were beginning to ſlacken, or at leaſt had not ſince they ſat down to dinner been ſufficiently marked to be much obſerved, or to make her much diſtinguiſhed by them; a mortification ſhe could not ſupport with chriſtian patience: the two deareſt claims

of a coquette is, to inſpire men with admiration, and women with envy.

The ironical attack by which ſhe contrived to awaken his attentions, was followed up by a thouſand arch looks and brilliant eſcapes of wit on both ſides; amongſt which, Mrs. Oxburn, in a whiſper that brought their cheeks in contact with each other, compared the preſent meeting to a methodiſt love feaſt, which next to a chriſtening, or a wedding, ſhe declared to be the greateſt nuiſance of civil ſociety.

Somehow or other, this jeſt upon love-feaſts, chriſtenings and weddings, produced ſuch a convulſive laugh from the perſon it was addreſſed to, that the Ducheſs, whoſe head was not fixed on a neck remarkably elaſtic, and now erected with rather more ſtatelineſs than before, ſaid to Mrs. Oxburn—"What is this wit, ſo "very diverting to one, and ſo unenter-"taining to the reſt of my friends—you "had better give us our ſhare in your

"good

" good things, what is not general, may
" be offenſive."

" Oh Lord! (ſhe replied) it is not
" worth your Grace's notice; you know
" I talk all ſorts of nonſenſe."

" La! (ſaid Mr. Thomſon),"

" La! (ſaid Lady Rachel)."

" I underſtand you both extremely well
" (ſaid ſhe, ſhrinking her ſhoulders), you
" expreſs yourſelves ſo like my *tender*
" huſband, when he wants to get out of
" me what I do not want to tell him,
" that I cannot miſtake your meaning;
" but poſitively——"

" Pray (interrupted the Ducheſs) let
" us have done with the ſubject; I am
" perfectly ſatisfied—your daughter has
" a great deal of wit—but it will not
" always bear the inquiſition of critical
" propriety."

" Ah, Ducheſs! do not be very angry,
" or I am a gone creature—there is ſome-
" thing in *your* ſort of eye-lightening, that
" muſt bring me to terms.

"I wonder how your Grace came by "eyes that can do more with ſuch a mad "cap as I am, than all the tongues in "the world."

The Ducheſs ſmiled; it was a ſmile of perfect reconciliation—"Yes (ſhe replied) "you certainly are a mad cap, but I be-"lieve there is no harm in you; and it is "becauſe you are ſo very entertaining, "that I wiſhed to know what you had "been ſaying to Lord Auberry."

"Why then I will tell you. Shall I "my Lord,"—ſhe might as well have made her applications to king log, for his Lordſhip had juſt taken his laſt glaſs from the ſecond bottle of port that had been placed at his elbow, and was juſt retired within his own thoughts, from which even the voice, and gentle preſſure of Mrs. Oxburn's hand on his ſhoulder, could not recal him for any longer time than whilſt he pronounced theſe three ſhort words—as you pleaſe: and then he was off again.

Nobody

Nobody could be more expert at invention than Mrs. Oxburn; but before ſhe had fixed on what ſort of lie would be the beſt ſubſtitute for a truth ſhe dared not reveal. Dinner being removed, the Duke called on her to join with the Miſs Lexingtons, her brother, and Lord Auberry, in a glee.

This was the moſt pleaſing ſummons ſhe could now receive; it happened for the firſt time in her life ſhe found herſelf plunged in difficulties, without knowing how to get out of them: ſhe would not have heſitated, nor would it have coſt her one moment of conſideration, to have repeated aloud the very words which were only whiſpered in the ear of Lord Auberry; but on ſo intereſting an occaſion the remark was too ludicrous to gain her any ſort of credit, particularly with Lexington—On the contrary, ſhe feared it might in future prove a bar to the deſigns ſhe had on his heart, which his marriage might, ſhe thought, rather accelerate

than retard; ſhe was glad therefore to lay the jeſt aſide, as a dangerous, if not a fatal experiment on the temper of a lover, who as yet had not divided his affections, though ſhe lived in hopes of ſeeing them ſcattered about amongſt the women of her own claſs, and that ſhe ſhould come in for her ſhare of them at leaſt.

Lord Auberry, hearing himſelf called upon by the Duke to join in the glee, "Drink to me only with thine eyes, and I "will pledge with mine;" attempted the baſs, but making no hand of it, reſigned his part to Mr. Thomſon, who finiſhed it with *leſs* execution than his Lordſhip *could* have done, *but* with *more* than he was *then* capable of doing.

The firſt ſong being ended, Lord Auberry, who by that time had got himſelf pretty deep into his third bottle, propoſed that they ſhould ſing "Sigh no more "ladies;" he would try the ſecond part, and was *ſure* he ſhould be more ſucceſsful than in his former effort.

This

This was the firſt time that the preſence of Lord Auberry had called a bluſh into the cheeks of Miſs Montague; it was not a bluſh of recollection, or of regret, but it was the haſty meſſenger of ſurpriſe—it ſeemed to announce, that the choice of *ſuch a* ſong by Lord Auberry, in the *preſence* of Miſs Montague, had ſpoken him indelicate, unfeeling. Having modeſtly exemplified its purpoſe, it paſſed back to her heart almoſt as ſuddenly as it had flown to her face.

Lady Jane Petworth, not leſs ſhocked, and a great deal more offended, at Lord Auberry's effrontery, was the only perſon to obſerve the momentary change on the lovely countenance of Mary; her Ladyſhip ſaid ſomething to the Ducheſs, who immediately roſe to retire; a general move took place, and where in half an hour the Duke and his friends joined the ladies; inſtead of Lord Auberry returning with them, Mr. Lexington brought his excuſes

to her Grace, that he had found himſelf unwell, and was gone home.

This intelligence was a great relief to poor Mary, who not having obſerved that his Lordſhip was diſordered by his frequent libations during the time of dinner, dreaded his appearance in the drawing-room, almoſt convinced that he ſeriouſly intended to affront her; ſhe communicated her ideas to the Ducheſs and Lady Jane; the former laughed at her too apprehenſive delicacy, which had taken alarm without the leaſt provocation: "the "ſong (ſhe ſaid) was ſo generally ad-"mired, that it was downright prudery "not to think it fit for all occaſions; but "I remember (continued her Grace), now "you put me in mind of it, that Lex-"ington refuſed to ſing it the other "night—you are certainly a couple of "fools, and too ſentimental, I fear, to "enjoy the common good things of this "wicked world, and in a common ſtyle; "I appeal to Lady Jane if there was the "leaſt

"leaſt hurt done to you, ſuppoſing the "poor half intoxicated man had begun "and ended the ſong, that ſo much "offends you, and ſo much delights every "other body."

"And is it to me you appeal (replied "Lady Jane)? then I ſhall honeſtly give "my opinion againſt your Grace, and of "courſe for Miſs Montague."

"Why, ſure, you do not mean to be "romantic! however, I ſhall like to hear "what reaſons you can advance for this "ſtrange deciſion."

"I have only *one* to offer, and *that* may "be beſt explained by the whole tenor of "Lord Auberry's conduct to this dear "child; every word that falls from *his* "lips on the ſubject of infidelity, muſt, "in *her* preſence, be an inſult."

Lord Francis Lexington now broke in on the *confidential* communications and obſervations that were paſſing between the three ladies at a diſtance from the reſt of the company gathered together in little

ſnug coveys, in different places, all but the Duke and his nephew; they were gone back to the cloſet of the former, there to conclude the buſineſs, which Lexington's haſte to return to his party before dinner, had left unfiniſhed.

The Ducheſs aſked Lord Francis "if "he was come to rebuke them for not "ſitting down to cards."

"No (ſaid he), but to wiſh you a good "night."

"Surely you mean to ſup with us."

"Your Grace and Miſs Montague muſt "excuſe me, this note (he held a paper in his hand, and ſeemed agitated) obliges "me to meet the writer of it."

"I hope it is not a *challenge* (ſaid her "Grace, ſmiling)."

"Of no dangerous tendency at leaſt "(replied his Lordſhip); it is the chal-"lenge of a friend, who deſires to ſee me "immediately; I ſuppoſe on his own "affairs, and by his billet they ſeem to "demand diſpatch; the reaſon why I

"would

" would not diſappoint him is, that he
" thinks himſelf under ſome obligations to
" me *already*, and may want my *further*
" aſſiſtance."

" You raiſe my curioſity, (ſaid the
" Ducheſs) and muſt tell me who is this
" protegee of your's."

" Do you remember that about fifteen
" months ago I procured the conſulſhip
" at Liſbon for my old ſchool-fellow
" Jack Mellows."

" Oh! is that the perſon; I hope the
" poor man does not find his *honors* as
" unſubſtantial as Sancho Panca found
" his government good, and ſo is come
" to make you take them back again."

" Indeed (replied Lord Francis) I fear
" all does not go right; if I can do him
" another act of kindneſs, it would be un-
" generous to delay the execution of it."

" You may bring him to dine with me
" ſome day or other before he goes back;
" I like your new fangled gentry of all
" things; and if you get him created a
" baronet,

" baronet, or a peer, I ſhall like him the
" better."

" We will talk about that another time
" (ſaid he); at preſent I am keeping the
" honeſt Conſul in ſuſpenſe, the cruelleſt
" torture that can be impoſed on a fellow-
" creature; and I ſhould not ſleep to
" night was I the cauſe of inflicting it,
" even on the loweſt of my domeſtics."

" For a *great* man you are a *very* good
" one (ſaid the Ducheſs)."

" This is a ſentiment that ſhould be
" written in letters of gold (ſaid Lady
" Jane)."

" How humane, how generous, how
" noble, is the heart of Lord Francis (ſaid
" Miſs Montague)."

" But Lord Francis was vaniſhed; his
" good works were gone with him, and
" his praiſes were left behind!"

" If Hercules, the ſon of Jove, was di-
" vided in his choice, when the voice of
" *Pleaſure* inticed him one way, and the
" calls of *Wiſdom* commanded him an-
" other,

" other, it will be no bad apology for the
" indeciſion of a mere mortal: two roads
" are before me, and which to take is the
" queſtion; if I remain in Groſvenor-
" ſquare it is *Pleaſure* that invites me, *ſhe*
" preſides at the feſtal board—ſpreads her
" language through a wide circle—points
" the wits of conviviality—peeps on the
" radiance of mild beauty from the eyes
" of Mary—and revels with more fervent
" impreſſions in thoſe of the tranſported
" Lexington.—If, on the contrary, I fol-
" low Lord Francis, I have no ſuch ſe-
" ducing incitements; the voice of *Pleaſure*
" does not lead me that way, but is
" drowned by one louder, ſtronger, and
" more clamorous than her own—*Wiſdom*
" could not have more prevailing powers
" on the ſons of Jove, than *Curioſity* has
" over the ſons and daughters of men—
" I feel at this moment, that ſhe has a
" thouſand ways to make herſelf obeyed;
" ſhe pinches, bites, ſcratches, puts us on

" the

" the rack, and tortures us to the laſt
" gaſp of our expiring patience, if we re-
" fuſe to gratify her eager demands."

" *Pleaſure* adieu! I leave you in Groſ-
" venor-ſquare—Curioſity draws me away
" to the *Bath Hotel* in Piccadilly, where I
" ſhall find the *noble* Commoner walking
" up and down the front drawing room,
" in a paroxiſm of fury, *which* the *humble*
" Conſul, who kept cloſe at his heels,
" turned when he turned, and ſtopped
" when he ſtopped, was *vainly* endeavour-
" ing to appeaſe."

The intereſting dialogue being ſome-what advanced before my arrival, I muſt leave my ingenious Readers to patch it as well as they can with the thread of their own invention, to that part of the conference which I came juſt in time to ſnatch from the womb of oblivion.

" I tell you, Mellows, *the thing* is im-
" poſſible, by G——. It is as *impoſſible*,
" as for *this* room, in which I am *now*
" ſtanding,

" ſtanding, to run away from under my
" feet, and I know nothing of the mat-
" ter."

" I am grieved—I am ſorry, my Lord,
" to be the meſſenger."

" Tell me not of your grief, or your
" ſorrow (fiercely interrupted his Lord-
" ſhip), ſay rather that you have been *im-*
" *poſed* upon; *I tell* you *the thing* is im-
" poſſible."

" I have ſpoken nothing from report,
" my Lord."

" And what *better* authority have you
" for your damned intelligence."

" I have told your Lordſhip that I
" have been myſelf at Milan, that I
" went there the very moment I got the
" Abbeſs's letter, wherein ſhe conveyed
" to me the ſtrange news of Madame
" Felicia's elopement. I could not have
" uſed more diligence, had my own ſal-
" vation been at ſtake.—This I have had
" the honor of repeating three times, but
" your Lordſhip will not hear me pa-
" tiently,

" tiently, though I am come ſtraight " from Italy with no other intention than " to break the diſagreeable tidings to you, " as gently as the nature of them will " admit."

" Confuſion on your gentleneſs, and " ten thouſand curſes on your negli- " gence."

Here Lord Francis turned ſuddenly about, and fixed his fiery eyes on the trembling Conſul, with the vengence of an inſulted deity, and the phrenzy of a maniac.

Expecting ſome perſonal outrage, the *great* man's *little* friend mumbled a few incoherent phraſes, almoſt loſt in the diſtance to which he had involuntary retreated, as the only way to ſecure his ſafety.

When the paſſions are governed by cunning, nothing evaporates ſooner than the rage of an angry man, unleſs it is convenient to indulge it—Lord Francis had been thrown a little off his guard, he had given way to the *whole* ſtrength of his parental

parental feelings, and ſuſpicions might be formed to contradict his *aſſumed* character of *guardian* only to Roſina, he therefore went directly up to the ghaſtly-looking harbinger of evil tidings, with quite another ſort of countenance than what he had put on the moment before.

" My *dear* friend (ſaid he)."

My *dear* friend bowed himſelf to the ground.

" Give me your hand,"—the Conſul held it out as a child would have offered it to a cat, which he expected would claw him—" you have ſeen me *too* much diſ-
" compoſed about a matter in which *I* am
" no other ways concerned *than* from the
" *friendſhip* I bore to the father of *that*
" girl:—what imprudence has unmanned
" me—quite unmanned me! it has made
" me guilty of violences to which *my* diſ-
" poſition was before a ſtranger; it has
" made me *unjuſt* to you, *and* hateful to
" myſelf."

The

The *Conſul* wiped his eyes at the *great* man's recantation of errors—a bottle of champaign and another of burgundy, was *now* by his Lordſhip's orders placed on a table by the ſide of the fire, to which they both reſorted—a bumper reſtored the courage of one party, and ſeemed to aboliſh the animoſity of the other—*concord* took place of *diſcord*, and Mr. Mellows was calmly requeſted to give himſelf the trouble of once more repeating *thoſe* particulars, which had failed before to gain the *attention* they deſerved.

To recapitulate in his own words the Conſul's narrative, from the time that he embarked at Liſbon, ſailed to Italy, and diſembarked at Graveſend, might tire the patience of my moſt patient Reader; I ſhall therefore abſtract from it ſuch parts only as they may wiſh to be informed of, and leave the reſt to the pen of any other author, who loves to tell long ſtories better than I do.

The

The firſt intelligence he got of Roſina's elopement, was from the Abbeſs of the nunnery in which ſhe had been educated: this epiſtle being perfectly feminine, was of courſe not explanatory; the whole of its contents were compoſed of ſurmiſes, exclamations, and inuendos, ſuch as evidently obſcured the ſubject, but could not help to enlighten the dark underſtanding of Mr. Mellows.

The oftener he examined it, the more his confuſion increaſed; ſomething he ſaw had happened amiſs to the Ward of Lord Francis; the nature of this diſaſter he could not find out, he therefore took his departure immediately for Italy, to aſk what was the matter.

On his arrival at Milan, he went to the houſe which a few months before he had prepared for the reception of Roſina, *alias*, the Marchioneſs Felicia, and where he had fixed her eſtabliſhment.

He found the houſe ſhut up, he tried to make himſelf heard, but nobody anſwered—

ſwered—the hour was ten in the morning. He proceeded to the neareſt Hotel, and meant to have ſpoken to the maſter of it, but the maſter was gone out—he ſent for the miſtreſs; ſhe attended his breakfaſt table, but could give him no better account of the revolution that had happened in Roſina's family, than that the Marchioneſs, together with her chaperone, the Counteſs Mellefond, were gone away very ſuddenly; nobody knew whither; that they had taken only one woman to attend them, that the reſt were all diſcharged, and moſt of them ſtill diſengaged; one man only having got into another ſervice.

This was all the intelligence the poor Conſul could get from the Hotel, and it was next to nothing.

A jeweller, with whom he had laid out ſome money on his laſt tour, and alſo recommended to the Marchioneſs's future favor, was the next perſon to whom he applied for better information; here he

was

was wonderfully well received, and quite inundated with acknowledgments—I ſhall give you, dear Readers, a little more of the *ſhopkeeper*, than I have done of the *Maitres d'Hotel*.

Our diſconcerted countryman having accepted an invitation to repoſe himſelf, and prevailed on the obſequious vender of toys to ſit down by him, he told him the occaſion of his preſent journey to Milan, the ill ſucceſs his enquiries had been attended with, and requeſted that he would communicate all the particulars that appertained to the conduct of the Marchioneſs, either ſuch as he might have collected from his own obſervation, or ſuch as might have reached him through the channel of report.

" *Senior* (he replied, with the gravity " of a Senator), you could not have ap- " plied to any body more capable, or " more ready, than I am to obey your " commands.—I ſhall have the honor to " tell you, *Senior*, the Marchioneſs has

" been

" been my very good friend from your
" recommendation—I have ſold the *Mar-*
" *chioneſs*, ſince her reſidence at Milan,
" jewels to a large amount, for which I
" was honourably paid the day before her
" unexpected departure. I met ſeveral
" other tradeſmen waiting in the anti-
" room when I went to receive my money,
" who I ſuppoſe were ordered to bring
" in their accounts as well as myſelf."

On being aſked, if he then obſerved any particular preparations going forward, that ſeemed to imply a ſudden removal—" On the contrary, every thing (he ſaid) " was as quiet, and as ſilent, as it is " within the walls of his Holineſs's palace " at Rome."—" Did he ſee the Mar-" chioneſs?"—" No, (he replied, with a " note of admiration), he had not that " honor; few people were admitted to " the preſence of the Marchioneſs; her " buſineſs was always ſettled by the Coun-" teſs Mellefond, who alſo diſcharged *his* " demands"

Mellows

Mellows had been told the two ladies left Milan together, but he might have been misinformed, therefore his next queſtion was, "What is become of the "Counteſs?"

"She was gone with Signora."

"Did he know, or was it known by "any body in Milan, the route they had "taken?"

"That was a *myſtery profound.*"

"They *muſt* certainly have moved with "ſome *eclat*—where had they horſes—"where carriages for their expedition?"

"The *Signora's* carriages were all left "behind at Milan—they diſappeared "without *eclat*—the travelling equipage "was not hired at Milan—nobody could "gueſs from what place it was procured "—the elopement had occaſioned a great "deal of inquiry; nothing could be diſ-"covered."

"Were none of the ſervants who re-"mained behind able to give informa-"tion?"

"No, they were all diſmiſſed."

"But they *muſt* have ſeen *ſomething* "going forward; there muſt have been "*ſome* reaſon aſſigned for their diſ- "miſſion."

"They had received it on various pre- "tences, and were diſcharged ſo many "days prior to the Signora's excurſion, "that they ſaw nothing that could throw "any light on the tranſaction; the va- "cancies in the houſehold were often ap- "plied for, but never filled up; ſome "excuſe or other put off all who made "application. I recommended three "myſelf (ſaid the Jeweller), they were "ordered to wait a fortnight; and before "the time was expired, the Signoras had "withdrawn from Milan."

Mellows was a quiet, peaceable, accommodating ſort of man, and bleſſed with as much ſangfroid as his neighbours, particularly where his own intereſt was not very much involved; he might have liſtened, and aſked queſtions, without betraying

betraying any great ſymptoms of anxiety —however, it would be altogether unnatural to ſuppoſe, that where his intereſt with Lord Francis was ſo deeply at ſtake, he did not evince much anxiety and much aſtoniſhment at ſo many proofs of art, unequalled by any manœuvring he had ever met with before in the annals of female hiſtory. I alſo conceive, that for one malediction that he called down on the head of poor Roſina, a thouſand at leaſt were imprecated to cruſh that of the Counteſs, who muſt have led her inexperienced pupil, and conducted her through the whole labyrinth of miſchief.

" I imagine Signor (ſaid the mortified " enquirer) the Marchioneſs Felicia, ſince " her reſidence here muſt have eſtabliſh- " ed a very large and brilliant acquaint- " ance; and perhaps amongſt ſome of " *them* I ſhall be able to gain more in- " telligence, than it ſeems in your power " to give me."

" Pardon me (replied the Italian), par-

" don me, Signor; nobody has the honor
" to have ſo much reſpect for your perſon,
" and for the perſon of Signora, the Mar-
" chioneſs, as myſelf; and I ſhall have
" the vanity to ſurmiſe, you can no
" where be better informed; I know as
" much of this unexpected *arrangement*
" as any man or woman in Milan, or its
" environs."

" Can you tell me then if the Mar-
" chioneſs had a *favourite* lover, with
" whom it is poſſible ſhe might have made
" her *elopement?*"

" Every man who *ſaw* her was her *lover*,
" but it is preſumed none of them were
" ſucceſsful; her own woman, to whom
" I had the honor to preſent a toy on the
" Signora's birth day, had the goodneſs
" to tell me, the Marchioneſs poſſeſſed
" *too* much dignity to feel *la belle* paſſion
" for the fineſt Signor in Italy."

" Were there many of them that viſited
" at her houſe?"

" Her

" Her *femme-de-chambre* ſays no, that " thoſe who were admitted, came to viſit " the Counteſs and Signora; the Mar- " chioneſs ſeldom ſhewed herſelf in their " *converſaziones.*"

" But the *ladies* of Milan, I ſuppoſe, " viſited her with *leſs* reſtraint."

The Italian ſmiled, ſhrugged his ſhoulders, and ſhook his head—" At *firſt* (ſaid " he), they had the honour to ſhew her all " manner of reſpect, ſhe was aſked at all " their *parties*; but finding themſelves " over-looked when the Signora was pre- " ſent, ſhe was baniſhed from their ſo- " cieties."

" And of what did they accuſe her?"

" Are not *all* Signora's in all countries " like *our* own (ſmiling and ſhrugging " more ſignificantly than before); is it not " *ſufficient* grounds for accuſation, to be " *more* charming, *more* amiable, and more " beloved than themſelves—I have the " honour to give you this information, " from my own obſervation, having heard

" much conversation on the subject from
" the Signoras who frequent my ſhop,
" by whom I could find out, that when
" their doors were ſhut againſt the Mar-
" chioneſs, other reaſons were aſſigned
" for her excluſion—they pretended to
" have found out that *ſhe* did not ſupport
" her own ſtate, *but* that it was ſupported
" at the expence of *certain* condeſcenſions.
" ——Signor, do me the honour to ſay, if
" I have made myſelf underſtood?"

" I do not underſtand you—be ſo good
" to explain *what* you mean by *certain*
" condeſcenſions—to conſtrue them into
" the language of *my* country, they would
" bear an *infamous* meaning."

The Jeweller pauſed—he did not know whether it was beſt to retract or proceed; but the ſame enquiry being made with increaſing warmth, he confeſſed, with a great many more words than I am inclined to make uſe of, that the *ladies* of Milan, who were firſt on the moſt intimate footing of friendſhip with the Marchioneſs,

chioneſs, had *pretended* to diſcover—that ſhe was an *impoſtor*, and the miſtreſs of a rich man, who had *preſumed* to palm her off as a woman of birth, fortune, and honour.

At firſt, the agitated Conſul was much alarmed, leſt ſhe might have brought on herſelf the odiums that the *ladies* of Milan had placed to her account, but having heard to an end of this marvellous fabrication, he fully acquitted her, as nobody in the world could know better than he did, how groundleſs *theſe* reports were.

Had he entered a little deeper into this myſtery, and aſked the name of a protector ſo munificent, *his own* would certainly have been ready to anſwer the inquiry; in fact, he was himſelf the reputed liberal lover; and ſo far from thinking the *imputation* of ſuch an amour would be *offenſive* to a man, old enough at leaſt to have been grand-father to Roſina, the Italian might have *ſuppoſed* he was paying

his *court* by the moſt acceptable of all flattery.

Having got all that he ſuppoſed he could get out of the Jeweller, Mellowa made his bow, and departed.

His purſuit did not end here—he continued in Milan many days, viſited the convent, from whence he had got the firſt disjointed intelligence of Roſina's eſcape from Milan—the ſuperannuated Abbeſs could only croſs and bleſs herſelf—but knew nothing more of the matter—— the police was next applied to, it aſſiſted him in his reſearches, but to as little purpoſe—when all was done that could be done, on ſumming up the total of his enquiries, many of the Jeweller's hints were comfirmed, relative to the envy Roſina's charms had excited amongſt her fair neighbours; but on the ſtricteſt inveſtigation, neither her motives for withdrawing, to what place ſhe had withdrawn, or by what means purſued her journey, could not be diſcovered; however, by the over-

over-ruling influence of his friendly planet, he did not once hear himſelf named as the Marchioneſs's *chere amie*, though nobody ſcrupled to tell him, ſhe *was* actually ſupported by a *Protector* of that deſcription.

Like a ſkilful gardener I have lopped from the ſpreading vine of Mr. Mellows's narrative, all the heavy ſuperfluous wood, and left nothing but fruit bearing branches: —I have crammed as much into the compaſs of ten minutes reading, as, in the ſecond ſtage of repetition, has engaged the great man, and the great man's friend, from half paſt nine, till the church clock of St. James's pariſh ſtruck eleven.

To develope the thoughts of Roſina's father when in poſſeſſion of all the information he could ſubſtract from the particulars laid before him, would be attended with the ſame difficulty, as if I were to attempt finding out the longitude; and it may alſo be as eaſy to fix Mercury, or catch a ſhadow as it paſſes, as to tell you

of what colour or complexion were the thouſand agitating confuſed mutilated ideas, that ſucceeded each other in his diſtracted and ſubtle imagination.

Utterly unable to talk any longer on the ſubject, he did not even ſay whether he was ſatisfied or diſſatisfied with the Conſul's late voyage to Italy; deſired to ſee him the next morning, when he ſhould have conſidered what was further to be done, and wiſhed him a good night.

Lord Francis had diſmiſſed his chariot at the Bath Hotel; he therefore walked home with one *ſolitary* hope to give him light in the gloomy retroſpection of worldly diſappointments—his nephew was *only* on the *eve* of marriage, the engagement may be broken—his daughter may have preſerved her *freedom*, though her *reputation* was forfeited—whilſt there is life, there will be hope—it is a vigorous principle, it ſets the head and the heart at work, and animates a man to do his utmoſt—— it had all its uſual effects on the crafty parent

parent of Roſina, he fancied it was not impoſſible that the darling wiſh of his ambition might in time be accompliſhed in defiance of all preſent obſtacles.

In aid of theſe diſtant proſpects, he called to his recollection the great *capability* of Mr. Andrew Solemn, in extricating his friends out of difficult ſituations, which do not run exactly in the ſtraight line of conſcience.

Mr. Solemn, a learned lawyer—his good friend—one with whom he intruſted a great deal, though not the *whole* of his confidence; proud of his Lordſhip's friendſhip, and rich in other ſubſtantial proofs of the high price at which his abilities were rated, had hinted in the warmth of his zeal, that *he* ſhould ſoon undertake a cauſe for Sir Aſhton Montague, which might eventually further the wiſhes of Lord Francis.

Contemplations, ſuch as theſe, brought him to the door of his own houſe—I ſhall leave him to enter alone, for *there are* a

ſort of people that I do not like to follow into *retirement*, where I am ſure they can command no better companions than their own *miſerable* reflections.

The key is found—the cabinet is opened—my wits are exhauſted—my memory fatigued—and here I unfold the firſt letter that preſents itſelf, as having the beſt claim to precedency in the *Memoirs of Mary*.

LETTER

LETTER XXXVIII.

Lady Jane Petworth to Miſs Beauly.

April 13, 17—

MY DEAR NIECE,

THE contents of my letter to Lady Auberry will explain to you what a ſad revolution has happened in our affairs, and caſt a cloud over our beſt proſpects.

I have not given the ſtroke that muſt wound her peace, and kill the deareſt of her hopes, with a *ſteady* hand or *unfeeling* heart, but it is to conceal what would afflict her more than all the reſt, that I write to you only of my unceaſing alarms for the health of our beloved Mary.

She is certainly very unwell. I ſhall not be eaſy till I have brought her back to

to Riverſdale; but as long as the good Duke continues to breathe, or at leaſt to keep his recollection, there will be no moving her from him—at preſent his ſenſes are not impaired, and he is unhappy if ſhe leaves his bedſide for ten minutes: the Ducheſs too, ſeems to draw all her comfort from the ſame ſource, but whilſt ſhe is adminiſtering to their conſolation, the dear creature is herſelf ſo altered, by ſurpriſe and fatigue, that I live in hourly expectation of her being ſeized with ſome violent diſorder, that may be too ſtrong for her delicate conſtitution to ſuſtain: I would not have Lady Auberry know how ill ſhe looks for the world.

I account as well as I am able, in my letter to her Ladyſhip, for the ſilence of Miſs Montague. My excuſes, though natural, are ſo ſhort, that I ſuſpect it will require much of your rhetoric to give them force.

I have

I have entered very explicitly into all the particulars of this ſtrange myſterious buſineſs; it was a taſk too hard for the dear Mary to perform, but ſhe deſired that her grandmother might have every thing explained to her, ſo as to ſatisfy her as amply as if ſhe had been a ſpectator of the whole tranſaction.

I ſhall ſend Miſs Forteſcue back to her parents; ſhe has loſt my confidence; I like her no longer; ſhe is more than ever with the haughty Marchioneſs, and her envious daughters; it is eaſy enough to ſee that her pretended ſympathy for Miſs Montague is a forced ſentiment. I am ſure ſhe is falſe, and will have nothing more to do with her.

I need not charge you to keep up the ſpirits of Lady Auberry, ſhe has been too often the patient victim to every ſpecies of misfortune, to fill us with fears now that ſhe is called upon to ſupport an inferior diſappointment; for after all,

it

it does not deſerve to be named by any ſtronger appellation.

Adieu, my dear Anna; Miſs Montague will write in a day or two, and you ſhall ſoon hear again from your truly affectionate aunt,

J. PETWORTH.

LETTER

LETTER XXXIX.

Lady Jane Petworth to Lady Auberry.

April 12, 17—

DEAREST of all dear friends, your charming grand-daughter deputes me, to her hiſtorian to make you acquainted with *ſome*, not very flattering circumſtances, that have lately taken place in our little department; and *others*, of a more melancholy nature, in which the excellent Duke of Cleveland is principally concerned—he is ill—I fear too he is in danger, and yet he is the only perſon who is not penetrated with grief at the fate that ſeems to await him.

His Grace has been viſited by another ſtroke, the laſt perhaps he will be permitted

mitted to receive: he is ſo fond of Miſs Montague, that he will not let her eſcape from his bed-ſide long enough to give your Ladyſhip a very *extraordinary* detail, and of ſome length which muſt of courſe ſurpriſe; *but* when every thing is conſidered, cannot ſeriouſly afflict you.

Was I writing to any other woman except Lady Auberry, and held a rod of diſappointment over her head before I let it fall, I might have been tempted to ——— the uſual canting phraſe of Job's comforters on the benefit of patience; but here *my* talents, if I have any for preaching, are entirely uſeleſs; it would be an inſult, worſe than was offered to that man of many ſorrows, was *I* to teach the leſſon of reſignation to *her*, who is already the very beſt pupil in the ſchool of reſignation, of which I am hardly worthy to be appointed door-keeper.

Whoever had looked in upon us three days ago, for I now almoſt live in Groſvenor Square, might with much appear-

ance

ance of truth, have ventured to pronounce us the happieſt little party, within or without the pale of faſhion.

Love—harmony—confidence—and fidelity, ſeemed to have made their *reſidence* with *us*; every thing was *en train*, and Hymen ſtood on the tip-toe of expectation, ready to perform his office—but of all theſe matters Miſs Montague has been informing you for the laſt fortnight; I wiſh I was not obliged to reverſe the ſcene—oh! what a catalogue of vexation would it have ſpared me.

The day before yeſterday, which was Thurſday, the Duke went to the drawing-room, and received a very gracious compliment from their Majeſties, on the approaching marriage of his nephew; many enquiries were made about your Ladyſhip and Mary—juſt praiſes beſtowed on your charming grand-daughter. Lexington, though a good ſubject is a bad courtier; he got himſelf excuſed from attending his Grace, becauſe he preferred going with the

the Ducheſs, Miſs Montague, and myſelf, to Richmond; he drove her in his curricle; her Grace and I went in the Duke's chariot.

The morning was remarkably pleaſant, and we loitered about in the garden ſo long, that when we returned to town, it was too late for Henry to go home and dreſs before dinner—"You may ſtay as "you are (ſaid the Ducheſs), you will ſee "nobody but thoſe you dine with every "day, who think they have a right to "the run of my table, becauſe they are "ſometimes neceſſary to my amuſe-"ment."

"I ſhall certainly do ſo (he replied, "with a gay air), ſince I have *your* per-"miſſion. Lady Jane will have no ob-"jection, ſhe is too reaſonable not to "confeſs that a man can *occaſionally* be "entertained more advantageouſly than "in making his toilet."

His eyes beaming with affection, were directed to Mary; ſhe ſmiled.

"It

" It does not ſignify, Miſs Montague, " what *you* think about the matter, the " *worſt* look you can put on will not " *frighten* me; and the more you practice " your *witchcraft*, the more determined " you ſhall find me not to quit my poſt."

" Dear Mr. Lexington, how can you " ſuppoſe I want to get rid of you? I am " ſure your dreſs is extremely well."

" *Dear Mr. Lexington* (repeated he with " tranſport)! *deareſt* Mary did you mean " any thing more by *that* " Dear Mr. Lex- " ington," than merely as if you had ſaid, " dear me—or, dear heart—or, dear friend " —or, oh dear?"

The Duke juſt then returned from St. James's, he told us all what had been ſaid to him; and I do not believe I ever ſaw him in ſuch ſpirits, or look ſo well, in my whole life before.

He then examined his nephew, as to the manner in which he had been diſpoſing of his time; " I am ſure (ſaid he) " you

" you have not beſtowed any part of it
" upon your outward adornments."

" Indeed I have not (he replied), and I
" will tell your Grace how it happens,
" that you find me juſt as you ſaw me at
" your earlieſt levee: I have had the
" honor to eſcort my Aunt and Lady
" Jane to Richmond; Miſs Montague
" inſiſted on going with *us*, and that I
" ſhould drive her in the curricle."

" Lord bleſs me, what are you talking
" about (cried Mary)! you are certainly
" gone diſtracted!"

" Don't be always (interrupting me),
" Miſs Montague; but ſuffer me to tell
" my uncle, that when I came back, I
" would have gone home, and made my-
" ſelf fit to ſet down at table, but *you* pre-
" vented me—" I am ſo ſoon to take you
" for *better* for *worſe*, it is of no conſe-
" quence in the world, whether your hair
" is powdered, or not powdered, you
" are equally *dear* to *me* in this *old* coat

" and

" and half boots, as if you had on the " fineſt dreſs in the world."

" And did I ſay this?"

" To be ſure you did; or if not, you " *ought* to have ſaid it, which amounts " exactly to the ſame thing."

I repeat part of this lively converſation which paſſed before dinner, to ſhew your Ladyſhip there was at leaſt no depreſſion on his ſpirits at that time; he now always ſits next to her at table; his humour diverted every body, his gaiety rather increaſed than diminiſhed; and as to his tender attentions, they hitherto have been invariable.

The firſt courſe was removing, when his own ſervant who had not waited at dinner, came into the room and delivered him a ſealed note; he thruſt it into his pocket, and probably would have thought of it no more, if Miſs Montague had not put him in mind of his omiſſion juſt as he was following us into the drawing room, there being no gentle-

men

men to detain the Duke or him after we retired.

He withdrew to a window, opened the note, and ſeemed to examine the contents more than once; then taking up his hat, ſaid he muſt baniſh himſelf for half an hour, and when he came back, he would *perhaps* tell us the occaſion of his ſhort abſence.

We ſoon after ſet down to cards, there were only players enough to form two parties; your grand-daughter never ſits down if ſhe can help it; however, there was one wanting at *caſino*, and ſhe good-naturedly conſented to make up the deficiency. I happened to be her partner, and ſhe played very well, till the little muſical clock, which ſtands over the mantle piece, ſtruck ten. Mr. Lexington had been gone near two hours. Mary kept her eye upon the door, and I loſt my money.

At twelve, ſupper was announced; no Lexington appeared.

I love

I love early hours, and do not tempt myſelf to keep late ones by ſitting down to table in any body's houſe after eleven; the Ducheſs knows my rule, and never importunes me to break through it. Your lovely child went with me as far as the outer room—"I wonder," ſaid ſhe, "what "is become of him!"—All the reply I could make her was, "Don't be uneaſy, "my dear—I dare ſay he will be able to "give a good account of himſelf to-"morrow."

I certainly did not feel ſhocked, nor indeed very much ſurpriſed, that he was not returned before I came away; yet I had a diſagreeable ſenſation hung about me, for which I was unable to account—I got no quiet ſleep the whole night, and the next morning went before my uſual hour to inquire what news there was of the truant. I found the family aſſembled together except *him*, who I was moſt anxious to ſee; and by a ſingle glance on the moſt ingenuous of all ingenuous countenances, I diſcovered

that Miſs Montague was not in a ſtate of leſs ſuſpenſe than when I left her the preceding evening.

"Lady Jane (ſaid the Duke), have you "ſeen any thing of Lexington to-day?"

"No (ſaid I), on the contrary—his half "hour being fairly out, I expected to have "found him with your Grace."

"This conduct is mighty odd (obſerved "the Ducheſs), I do not *half* underſtand "it; ſurely it is treating *Miſs Montague* "with very little conſideration, and our-"ſelves with as little ceremony."

Lord Francis, who was ſtanding with his back to the fire when I came in, now moved to a chair next her Grace—he is ever ready to conciliate any little diſſenſions which happen to fall in his way, and ſeldom fails to affect his purpoſe, ſo great are the powers of his perſuaſive eloquence. He ſaid, on the preſent occaſion, "that "though he could not acquit his Nephew "of *heedleſsneſs*, in not ſending his apologies "for breaking through his engagement laſt "night;

"night; yet, on the ſcore of the offence "*itſelf*, he was ſure her Grace, who was "always rational, would find, in the *preſent* "conduct of young men much in the world, "and of a *certain* rank, that ſort of excuſe "which would entitle poor Lexington to "her forgiveneſs."

"I ſhall not trouble myſelf about *him* "(ſhe retorted, with much diſpleaſure); "but, if I was *Miſs Montague*, I never "*would* forgive him."

"*Then*, I think, my good Siſter, *Miſs* "*Montague* would be to blame. Beautiful "and amiable as ſhe is—*even* Miſs Mon-"tague muſt not expect *but* that her "lover will ſometimes forget his *own* hap-"pineſs, and partake with thoſe who are "*leſs* fortunate, in the *foibles* incident to "young men of faſhion—this town is full "of temptations, and if he has fallen into "*ſome* of them, he may be ſubject to our "diſpleaſure; but let him not incur *abſolute* "condemnation."

Mary did not ſpeak; yet her ſweet eyes, that have a language peculiar to themſelves, thanked Lord Francis with eloquent ſoftneſs for pleading the cauſe of his Nephew.

Not ſo the Ducheſs—ſhe had no notion of theſe *nice* diſtinctions, they were vague and idle—*puniſhment* was the conſequence of *offence*—at leaſt they would never be divided in *her* diſtribution of juſtice—Miſs Montague might do as *ſhe* pleaſed—ſhe did not want to govern *other* people any more than to be *governed* herſelf.

Your Grand-daughter, the liquid luſtre of her eyes encreaſed by the enthuſiaſm of ſentiment, now roſe from her ſeat; and going up to her angry Grace, ſhe ſaid, in a voice impregnated with the tones of peace and full of intreaty, "No; you do not "*wiſh* me, I am ſure *you* do not wiſh me, "to be *diſpleaſed* with Mr. Lexington; "nor can you be *very* long diſpleaſed "with him yourſelf—I will venture to "predict, that the moment he comes in

"he

" he will be forgiven—indeed, indeed,
" dear Ducheſs, it is *impoſſible* to be angry
" with Mr. Lexington."

" You are a little fool," was all the reply.

The Duke, who had been walking about the room ſilent, and apparently vexed, hearing her the advocate of Henry, ſtopped, and putting his arms round her with the affection of a Father, " Charming
" pleader (ſaid he)—Ducheſs, it is not in
" nature that you ſhould reſiſt ſo lovely, ſo
" candid, ſo diſintereſted an advocate."

" I don't know (returned ſhe, with a
" relenting ſmile,) but that, on *her* account,
" I *may* pardon him, if he is able to make
" any decent defence when he does come—
" Why don't you ſend for him, Duke?"

" I have done that already (he replied),
" and expect him every moment (a ſervant
" appeared at the door)—Oh! here is the
" meſſenger returned—What word have
" you brought from my Nephew?"

"Mr. Lexington, your Grace, was not "at home?"

"How long had he been gone out?

"He did not come home laſt night, "your Grace—the ladies bid me ſay, they "were afraid ſome accident had happened, "and ſhould be here preſently."

The man withdrew—his Grace ſtood in a poſture of conſideration—the Ducheſs ſaid, "Is *this* a man to be *forgiven?*"—Lord Francis ſmiled, and muttered ſomething not much in diſfavour of *faſhionable levities*—Miſs Montague turned pale, ſhe was ſure that the Miſs Lexingtons were in the right, and that ſome misfortune muſt have happened to him.

Miſs Lexington, followed by Maria, ruſhed that inſtant into the room, and really they did look very much terrified—their firſt queſtions were a perfect duet—"Oh, Uncle! oh, Ducheſs! what is be-"come of my Brother?"

The perſon *moſt* intereſted in the fate of *this* Brother was not conſidered by either of

of them, though her preſence, had they been, like her, endowed with the divine gift of female ſoftneſs, would have retained the violence of their emotions, whether *real* or *feigned*—but *ſhe* was totally diſregarded; and they went on, ſuppoſing him to be maſſacred, murdered, and mangled, with as little feeling, as if your Granddaughter had not been in the ſmalleſt degree intereſted in his ſafety. The dear child was ſo much terrified by their unnatural ſuggeſtions, that, laying her head on my boſom, ſhe almoſt fainted in my arms.

The Ducheſs ſent her bottle of ſalts to me by Maria; and ſaid to them both, "I "wiſh you were poſſeſſed of a little more "*conſideration*—there is nothing I hate ſo "much as theſe ſort of *affected* terrors— "you may think they are very pretty; but "*Miſſes* are often ſubject to miſtake as to "what does, and what does not, become "them—we ſhould all have given you "credit enough for your *ſiſterly* affection, "if you had not made this mighty fuſs

" about it. You ſee the conſequence, Miſs " Montague has not yet caught the *plague* " of affectation, and you have half killed " her with your *outrageous* clamour."

I felt, and will acknowledge it, a great deal of ill-natured delight at the well-timed rap ſhe had given them over the knuckles; for I *know* they *love* Miſs Montague as much as they do their *prayer-book*, or as much as all the girls of their *own* ſtamp do in general love her—If I had doubted it before, the *pert* anſwer returned by Miſs Lexington, and the ſilent expreſſion of diſdain that clouded her ſiſter's countenance, would have been an infallible direction to *that* private drawer of their hearts, where envy, hatred, and malice, is uſually locked up to ſerve their private purpoſes.

Your gentle Mary had heard the well-earned rebuke as plain as I did—no particular ſoftneſs of voice attended the delivery; but on her it produced quite another effect than it did on me, and ill as they deſerved

ſerved her *gracious* pity, her fears for Lexington were loſt in her apprehenſions that ſhe had been the *innocent* cauſe of his ſiſters being brought into diſgrace.

She recovered herſelf in a moment—raiſed her head from my boſom—went up to the *hardy-diſpoſed* girls—her ſoul overflowing with the milk of human kindneſs—and begged their pardon with as much ſubmiſſion as if ſhe had *really* given them offence; tried to perſuade them out of *their* fears, when her *own* were almoſt inſupportable, and to comfort them, *who* was herſelf in *much* greater need of being comforted.

Such, my revered, my incomparable friend, was our *general* ſituation, when one emotion of joy elated all our hearts at the ſight of Lexington himſelf.

Every body now ſeemed aſhamed of their late alarms, and were inclined, I thought, to conceal them from *his* obſervation—all, except the Ducheſs, who, riſing, walked with great ſtate half way

down the room to meet his advances, and addreſſing him with much dignity — "I "hope, Mr. Lexington," ſhe ſaid, "you "do not find yourſelf *incommoded* by your "laſt night's irregularities."

"Not the leaſt, Madam; the *company* "in which I paſſed it was ſo agreeable, ſo "*much* to my *own* taſte, ſo full of *infor-* "*mation*, it is impoſſible I could in any "manner be *inconvenienced* from their ſo- "ciety."

"But I ſuppoſe in this good company "you contrived to get drunk?"

"No; I was only intoxicated with "happineſs."

"I do not believe you, Henry — your "*pale* face and trembling hands tell me "*quite* another tale. If I do forgive you, "and if your Uncle is not ſeriouſly of- "fended, you are to make your acknow- "ledgments to Miſs Montague."

"No," ſaid he; "for *Miſs Montague* "muſt make *her* acknowledgments to "me."

Oh!

Oh! what an enchanting ſmile did the beloved Mary beſtow upon him: ſhe had been ſo accuſtomed to his ironical manner of ſignifying his affection, and approved the *elegant* ſubſtitute ſo much more than *ſtudied* declarations, that ſhe did not perceive any thing extraordinary in his words or his manner.

"Well," continued the Ducheſs, "you "have certainly behaved extremely *ill*, "and if ſhe does pardon you, it is *more* "than I ſhould do."

He made no anſwer, but turned to the Duke, who alſo reprimanded him pretty ſeverely. He next ſpoke to me, and aſked if *I* was as angry with him as the reſt of his *friends?* — ſaid ſomething to Lord Francis, who ſhook him very heartily by the hand—took notice of both his *ſiſters*— Not a word all this time to your Granddaughter; he did not even caſt his eyes towards her, but threw himſelf into a chair: the hat he held in his hand fell to

the ground, and he violently kicked it from him with his foot.

I ſaw his *pointed* neglect of the *now* really-agitated charmer was ſinking deep on her ſpirits; her colour changed every moment. I ſaid, "What is *that* ring on "your finger?" — I took her hand, as if to admire it, though I had ſeen it a hundred times before — I wiſhed to make *her* comprehend me, but not to draw the attention of *others* to witneſs her evident confuſion—her hands were as cold as ice —I gently preſſed them—ſhe returned the preſſure, and whiſpered, as ſhe hung down her head as if to point out ſomething about the ring, "Good God! what can be the "matter?"

"*Nothing* is the matter, my love," I re-whiſpered. "Don't you ſee he is half "aſleep?—He denies that he has drank "to hurt himſelf; but I am convinced he "is only juſt now riſen from his bottle— "*all* will be well preſently."

I thought

I thought exactly as I ſpoke, and my opinion ſeemed a pretty general one: every body looked at him, and the ſmile that paſſed over their faces explained what they ſuppoſed to be his ſituation.

He had croſſed one leg over the other, thrown his head back on the chair, and his eyes were cloſed.

The Duke fell ſo completely into the ſame error with me, that he was adviſing him to go home and refreſh himſelf with a few hours ſleep, when in came *flauntingly*, and ready to coquette with the firſt man who ſhould happen to croſs her, the odious *blot* of her ſex, and the deteſtation of all *modeſt* young women, Mrs. Oxburn.

I cannot tell for what, but the Ducheſs ſpares this *bold* creature more than ſhe does any other perſon who comes to the houſe; I believe it is becauſe ſhe dreads being turned into ridicule, which muſt be the fate of a *divinity* who is not well with her; and I have known inſtances when *even* her Grace is not *ſpared*, with all the pains

pains ſhe takes to avoid it, in any other place but under her *own* roof.

" Bleſs me, good people (cried ſhe), " what can you be all doing in ſuch a " tremendous *family circle*; you put me " in mind of a chriſtening—or a wed- " ding—or a funeral: oh; aye, it is a " *funeral* ſure enough, and *here* is the " *corpſe*—Are you *quite* dead indeed Lex- " ington?" She took up his hand, then let it go again; it actually fell by his ſide as if he had really ceaſed to breathe— " Alas poor Yorick! (ſhe exclaimed) it " is all over with him; why don't *you* " come Miſs Montague, and try if *your* " beauty and accompliſhments cannot bring " about a reſurrection?"

In a moment, all the languor of grief was baniſhed from Mary's cheeks, which were now ſuffuſed with a bluſh of reſentment, and ſhe anſwered with that native dignity, that ſpirit of propriety, that chaſtened and true wit, which ſo infinitely becomes her——" Your application to

" me

" *me*, Madam, is extremely abſurd; the " caſe of Mr. Lexington muſt be deſpe- " rate, if all *your* pains are ineffectual— " had I any *ſupernatural* powers, they " ſhould be exerted in your ſervice, " becauſe I ſhould think it more to my " honour to effect a *reformation*, than a " *reſurrection*."

" You called for it (ſaid the Ducheſs), " and I am glad ſhe has not diſappointed " you."

" It does but *increaſe* my debt of *grati-* " *tude* (replied the audacious Dame), and " will only make me the *more* indefati- " gable to pay *her* what I owe—I never " permit myſelf to remain *long* under *ſuch* " ſort of obligations."

Lexington, who appeared neither to have ſeen or heard any thing ſince he had put himſelf into an attitude of repoſe, ſuddenly ſtarted on his feet, and I thought was coming towards that ſide of the fire where I was ſitting with your Granddaughter; but he ſtopped ſhort, then retreated

treated to the chimney, and ſtood with his back to the grate. I watched his motions attentively, for now I began to ſee there was ſomething more at the bottom of his ſtrange behaviour, than could be accounted for by the conviviality of his laſt night's frolic.

A little fox dog, who, taking advantage of the door being opened to admit a *leſs* reſpectable *animal*, had, unobſerved, followed Mrs. Oxburn into the room—juſt as ſhe had finiſhed her impertinent ſpeech, it crept out from under its maſter's chair, where it had taken ſhelter, came fawning towards him, couched at his feet, and at laſt attracted his notice.

" I think you are fond of that dog (ſaid Lord Francis), wiſhing, I ſuppoſe, to call him off from his ſullen fit of contemplation.

" You are not miſtaken (he replied with " vivacity), I am fond of *all* created " beings who love *me*, and are *faithful* to " me; this creature *pretends* to no *more* " than

" than he *feels*, and would not forſake *me*
" for any *other* maſter in the kingdom—
" but well thought of my Lord (ſtarting
" from his ſubject) it this moment recurs
" to me, that ſoon after I came from the
" Continent, you ſaid you ſhould take a
" trip *there* yourſelf early in the ſpring;
" pray have you ſettled your time, and
" marked out the route by which we are to
" proceed?"

" *We?*" (repeated Lord Francis)—I cannot conceive why he ſhould look delighted, but *delighted* he certainly *did* look.

" Have you forgot then that *I* am to
" be your companion" (retorted Lexington).

" But *that*, my dear boy, I have *ſince*
" underſtood was *conditional*;" and he directed his eyes full at Mary.

" *Conditional* or *unconditional*, my Lord,
" I have *no* arrangements *now* on *this* ſide
" the water, that will prevent my fulfilling
" my engagement to you—you will find

" me

" me ready to attend you in half an hour—
" but if you cannot get ready ſo ſoon, I
" ſhall wait till you can come up to me in
" Paris."

Inſpiration only can give your Lady-ſhip any idea adequate to the confuſion now written by the finger of aſtoniſh-ment, in characters of white and red, on the face of every electrified auditor.

Before I proceed on this marvellous explanation, you will want to be in-formed how the darling of your maternal heart ſuſtained a ſhock, ſo calculated to wound, at the ſame ſtroke, her *affections*, and her *pride*—I ſhall tell it you pre-ſently—I ſhall aſſure you with the ſtrict-eſt truth, that whatever were her *in-ternal* feelings, and *I know* they were *exquiſite*, ſhe had ſo much command over her paſſions, as to appear by far *leſs* intereſted in the determination of her *ungrateful*, unmanly lover, than any one perſon preſent.

You

You aſk if he had the aſſurance to look towards her—yes, he did look towards her, but it was the glance of a thief, and when he thought nobody obſerved the tract his eyes had taken; and even then his ſtubborn countenance underwent no change. I fancied it ſaid, *My heart is callous towards you*; and yet I am certain, with all his affected *nonchalance*, her ſoft, but ſpirited compoſure, muſt have pierced his ſoul with a thouſand daggers.

You are not to ſuppoſe the Duke or Ducheſs remained ſilent; I only put them by to ſpeak to you of your divine Grand-daughter; the horror with which I beheld Lexington after he had made his *odious* ſpeech to Lord Francis, was ſufficient, I thought, for any mortal feelings; but they were infantine compared to what were expreſſed by thoſe *guardians*, who, I muſt confeſs, are worthy of the *precious* truſt confided to *their* protection.

I ſhall

I ſhall ſay nothing of the Ducheſs's words, *they* were hardly intelligible; her Grace was *ſo* very violent, that as ſhe lifted up her hands, I proteſt, had they fallen on the treacherous Henry, it would have been no more than I expected—the Duke was leſs agitated, but his *ſuppreſſed* anger was a thouſand times more terrible, and may perhaps in the end prove of fatal conſequences to himſelf.

" Have I heard right, *Sir* (ſaid he, " going cloſe up to Lexington, and look- " ing ſternly at him) *or* have I only " *dreamed* that you was a *ſcoundrel?*"

" Oh! for God ſake (ſaid your beauti- " ful, intereſting Mary, riſing and catching " hold of his Uncle's hand), for God ſake, " my dear Duke, do not ſpeak ſo *harſhly* " to Mr. Lexington, I am *ſure* he is *not* " to blame: I am *ſure* he muſt have " *very* ſufficient reaſons for his conduct, " though it may not be proper to explain " them."

" Never

Never ſhall I forget the look with which Henry ſurveyed her; it was *agony*, it was *deſpair*, it was *madneſs*; but it was gone in an inſtant; and he made *this* remarkable anſwer, with a firmneſs of voice, inconſiſtent with his deranged appearance.

" I *thank* you, Miſs Montague (ſaid " he), your obſervation is a good one— " I *have* reaſons, and I will *not* declare " them—nobody in the world knows bet- " ter *than* Miſs Montague, that *I am* a " man of *honour*; and *no* ſcoundrel."

" Go back, my love (ſaid the Duke), " till I have forced this *headſtrong* boy to " do *you* juſtice; don't be alarmed, child, " (for he ſaw her delicacy had miſappre- " hended *his* meaning)—it is no longer my " intention to make him your *huſband*; he " is infinitely *now* below your conſidera- " tion; but I will make him confeſs from " *what* motive it is, that he *has* injured " you by this *daring* inſult."

" *That*,

"*That*, my Lord, is not in your "Grace's power—becauſe it is not in my "*own* to give you the ſatisfaction you "require."

Mary returned to her ſeat by me, and ſaid ſoftly, "Would to God I had never "left Riverſdale."

"*You* and *I* Lexington (continued the "Duke), *muſt* underſtand each other bet-"ter than we *ſeem* to do at preſent. I "ſhould not from *choice* have entered on "*ſuch* a ſubject as this, in ſo *public* a man-"ner—particularly before a *perſon* pre-"ſent, who is not by relationſhip in-"tereſted in the affairs of *my* family—" directing his looks to Mrs. Oxburn, who would *not* take any hint that muſt drive her from a ſcene the moſt *entertaining*, I will venture to ſay, that could have been diſplayed before her—"No, Sir (purſued "his Grace) it was what I would *much* "rather have *avoided*, but you have "*already* ſo completely expoſed yourſelf,

"that

"that it is *too* late to correct *our* mutual "fault; how *you* have acted wrong, I "need *not* explain, but *I* ſhould have had "more command of my temper; I ſhould "have governed it with more addreſs, "and requeſted the honour of your at-"tendance in my cloſet; *where*, if *you* "recollect, we have *lately* ſpent ſome very "agreeable hours together, in arranging "*certain* ſettlements, which you *then* made "me believe was neceſſary to your hap-"pineſs."

Henry bowed profoundly, but anſwered not a ſyllable.

"And why is it that they are no longer "neceſſary to *your* felicity, *young* man; "*has* Miſs Montague given you any cauſe "for *offence*? Your *impertinence* conveys "an accuſation againſt her, that *ſhall* be "removed—I *command* you to tell me."

"With ſorrow I repeat to your Grace, "that it is not in my power—*time* only "can juſtify me to *you*, and to Miſs Mon-"tague."

"There

" There is *no* time but the *preſent* (ſaid " the Ducheſs, riſing with great warmth, " and turning herſelf to the parties who " were both ſtanding), there is *not* an- " other *moment* to which the clearing up " *this* vile affair *can* be delayed—hear me, " Lexington, for I *will* be heard—the " infidelity of which you ſhew yourſelf " capable, is big with miſchief; it ſtrikes " at the fame of an amiable, lovely girl, " who has done you *too* much honour in " accepting *your* propoſals. The public " manner in which you have choſe to " withdraw them, demands *inſtant* and " *proper* reaſons, *publicly* aſſigned for your " *infidelity*; or the inuendo you *obliquely* " caſt on *her*, will, every moment they are " permitted to remain, *ſtamp* you—Coward " —Incendiary—Savage—and I tell you, " *Lexington*, there is not a cauſe in *heaven* " or on *earth*, in *reaſon* or in *folly*, that " ought to prevent *you* from doing juſ- " tice to the Grand-daughter of Lady " Auberry."

And

And now, my friend, is not your whole ſoul in a ſtate of alarm for your incomparable Mary; and does not your fond heart yearn to know how ſhe ſupported *this* part of her *trying* ſituation?—Have I not hitherto given you more cauſe for *exultation* than for *mortification*? And what remains untold, you muſt find better food to gratify your vanity, than matter to excite your vexation—Suppoſe you had been preſent when that part of the converſation took place, which wounded her in every poſſible direction: would you have done as I did, and riſen from your chair to leave the room? Would you have ſaid as I did, "Come, my dear child, let us retire?"—No, no; I have not half *your* fortitude; there is nobody in the world that poſſeſſes it in the *ſame* degree with yourſelf, *except* Miſs Montague—gueſs if I ſay more of her than ſhe deſerves, when I tell you what was her reply, on my making the fooliſh propoſal to withdraw.

" Not for the world (ſaid ſhe), ſhall I " run away from *any* imputation which is " *falſely* laid to *my* charge—I am not an " object of pity—but I *pity* Mr. Lexing- " ton; had I given him occaſion to com- " plain, I ſhould certainly *fear* him; I am " ſenſible of your kind intentions in draw- " ing me hence; but conſcious that I do " not deſerve his reproaches, to ſee his " *face*, or to hear his *voice*, can convey " no terrors to *my* mind, that ſhould make " me wiſh to avoid him."

I make no animadverſions, for I am impatient to bring the argument, and its concluſion, before your Ladyſhip.

Lexington continued immoveable, and only repeated to the Ducheſs what he had before ſaid to the Duke; her Grace left the *ſtubborn* culprit in a great rage, ſaying, as ſhe turned from him, " I *have* loved " you, *Sir*, till now, with the fondneſs of " a mother—*but* now I have done with " you *for ever*."

Lord.

Lord Francis, though he ſtood cloſe to his nephew, had not all this time opened his lips; the Ducheſs retiring with ſo much diſpleaſure, made him obſerve, "that he was ſorry to ſee *family* breaches "*widened*, which, with ſome little *ſkill* and "tenderneſs, it was *ſtill* poſſible to *heal*— "for his part, he muſt, though unaſked, "give it as his opinion, that if a man *did* "change his mind, and not chooſe to de- "clare for what cauſe he changed it, the "wreſting it from him by violence was "a freedom he ſhould never think of ſup- "porting, either by example or ſuffer- "age."

"*This* is fine talking, (muttered the "Ducheſs)."

He could not comprehend *why* it was neceſſary ſuch a man, merely becauſe he would not give up his ſecret, ſhould be baited like a wild beaſt, or hunted from ſociety as a monſter of miſchief—It was *impoſſible* a fame ſo well *eſtabliſhed* as Miſs Montague's, could in the *ſmalleſt* degree

suffer from a little *natural* infidelity, to which he *believed* all mankind were *more* or *less* addicted—shew *him* the villain *here-after*; who would dare to throw but the *shadow* of censure on the conduct of *Miss Montague*, and he would have the honour to vindicate her, *not* with words *merely*; but by those means which he should think it lawful to vindicate a daughter—daughter he had none—the greater his misfortune—but his judgment and his heart had united, to adopt as *such* the young Lady, whose merits and situation gave her the *most* undoubted claim to the affections of his *whole* family.

I did not like the first part of this long harrangue; his words were uttered with an air of pique, and when he began to talk of crimes, for which there is no excuse, calling them *little, natural infidelities*, I suspected he meant to compliment, *rather* than blame, his nephew; however, it ended so much better than it began, that, on the whole, I was not very much displeased—

the

the Duchess treated him with contemptuous inattention, and, I believe, from what immediately followed the close of his speech, the Duke was not much penetrated by any of his Lordship's arguments.

"*Brother* (said his Grace), I know your "*good* intentions, and acknowledge the "philanthropy by which *you* are go- "verned; but my *present* business is with "*Mr. Lexington*—I demand of *him*, whe- "ther he *will*, or will *not*, put off his "*intended* excursion to the Continent."

"I go certainly, my Lord—I have "already staid *too* long."—(He darted a look at your Grand-daughter, and I saw a large tear roll down his cheek.) "I "will convince your Grace *hereafter*, "that I am no *Scoundrel*, *Incendiary*, or "*Savage*."

"Will you put off your intentions for "one week?"

"It is utterly impossible."

"Go, then, ungrateful, unfeeling boy; "my *little* you muſt inherit, but my *friend*- "*ſhip* is forfeited for ever."

Lexington eagerly caught hold of his Uncle's hand, who angrily ſtruggled to releaſe it from his graſp; he carried it with fervour to his lips, but his agitation was too great for utterance, and the Duke hurried out of the room—he then addreſſed ſomething in a low voice to Lord Francis; I could not hear what were his words, but the reply was—"You may depend on "me, Henry."

I was all obſervation to his movements, anxious for what was to come next.—He walked to the window, threw up the ſaſh, pulled it down again; obſerved it was a fine morning, though it was pouring with rain, as if the heavens had melted into tears at the pathetic ſcene I have been trying to repreſent.

I do not greatly *admire* his letters, ſo have ſaid nothing about them—they had ſometimes given their *advice*, and added

intreaties

intreaties to it; but, both united, failed of gaining any attention from the perſon to whom they were *directed*.—Mrs. Oxburn was ſilent, but not idle, I dare ſay; ſhe ſeemed to be putting down on her memory all that was ſaid, and *not* in *ſhort-hand*.

The Ducheſs having taken herſelf off, after renouncing Lexington for ever, had ſat down at her embroidering frame with that aſſumed coldneſs, which was equal to her ſaying, "I am, from this moment, entirely independent of any farther de-"bates," ſhe drew out her needle in ſullen majeſty, and only anſwered when ſpoken to in monoſyllables.

As Henry made his laſt remark, he approached towards her, and requeſted that he might have the honour of preſenting her his laſt adieu.

She replied, without lifting up her face, "You may excuſe yourſelf from *that* "trouble, Sir, for I am not at *leiſure* to "receive them."—"Though you will "not permit me, Madam (he retorted

" with more pathos than anger) to pay any
" part of my debt; yet I have a heart that
" acknowledges the whole of your good-
" nefs; which heart, till I fee you again,
" fhall be crowded with prayers for your
" health, and my own reftoration to your
" favour."

" I *wifh* you would liften to *reafon*," (faid fhe, in a foftened tone).

" Thank you a thoufand times, my dear
" Aunt, for *that wifh*—think me *unreafon-*
" *able* ftill, but do not think me a *villain*."

" You will go, *then*?—Good God! how
" can you be fo ridiculous!"

" It is not *choice* that leads, but *neceffity*
" that forces me to go."

" *Neceffity* (repeated her Grace); why
" don't you fpeak to your Uncle, if *that*
" is all—the derangement of a young
" man's affairs is no reproach—I am fure
" the Duke will make you eafy."

" Not his Grace's whole fortune would
" make me eafy, Madam."

" Then

"Then you muſt be dreadfully in-
"volved."

"Dreadfully involved indeed."

"O Lexington! Lexington! I *too*
"well underſtand you! *repent*, and be for-
"given—I will anſwer for Miſs Mon-
"tague's forgiveneſs."

"Have you any commands, *Madam*,
"for France or Italy?"

"None that I think *you* worthy to exe-
"cute."

He bowed, and returned to his poſt by the fire; talked a moment to Lord Francis; went from him to his ſiſters, who were perfect *Niobes*; ſaluted them; came back again; drew nearer to my ſide, and ſaid, "God bleſs you! Lady Jane." Had he ſaid more, I ſhould not have underſtood him, his voice was ſo ſuffocated with emotion—Lord Francis took him by the arm, and dragged him ſeveral times up and down the room, with no other intention, I believe, than to prevent him from ſpeaking to Miſs Montague, for I ſaw he

had it in contemplation to advance, and that he was collecting himself for the trial. No doubt his Lordship thought a particular addreſs from him would affect her too much; but his precaution, whether right or wrong, did not ſucceed; for, ſtopping ſhort at the third turn, he diſengaged the arm on which his Uncle had been reſting, and was in a moment at the feet of your Grand-daughter.

Every ſoul that witneſſed this unexpected manœuvre, ſtood with aſtoniſhment. Mary, who till now had preſerved her compoſure, ſprung from her ſeat, and would have fled, but ſhe was ſurrounded in a moment, and nobody was inclined to favour her eſcape. "If I *muſt* ſtay (ſaid "ſhe, with renovated courage), Mr. Lexington muſt not add to my mortification, "By *inſulting* me with *feigned humiliation*; "If you chooſe to riſe, *Sir*, and will permit *me* to ſit down, I can have no "poſſible objection to hear what the Duke "of Cleveland's *nephew* wiſhes to ſay to

"the

" the Duke of Cleveland's *ward*; no other
" connection can *now* ever exiſt between
" us."

" I *know* it! I *know* it! I *know* it! (ex-
" claimed Henry), and it is for *your* dear
" ſake *only* that I repeat theſe *baneful*
" words—*No other connection can now ever*
" *exiſt between us.*—Are you ſatisfied,
" Madam?"

" Perfectly, Sir."

" And if you was not *ſatisfied*, Miſs
" Montague, you would be the moſt un-
" grateful of human beings. O, Mary!
" till you can fathom the delicacy, the
" extent of that deep-rooted paſſion I
" have ſacrificed to *your future* happineſs,
" you can make *no* calculation of the gra-
" titude you owe me."

" Whatever the debt may be, Sir, I am
" content to take your eſtimate of it,
" rather than give myſelf the trouble of
" conteſting the ſubſtance of your unex-
" pected demand—I am a proud and par-
" tial arithmetician; perhaps if I was to

"make my *own* calculation, my figures "might not tally so exactly with your own; "but that there might be errors on one "side or the other—you *say* you are en- "titled to my thanks—receive them, Sir, "on the score of gratitude; I shall be "better pleased to pay too much than too "little."—And she curtsied to him with a grace and dignity, that I never saw equalled, though her beautiful face, co- vered with blushes, was modestly averted from the traitor.

He was agitated beyond all description, and asked, in a tremulous voice, "Are we "friends, Miss Montague?"

She was silent, not from anger, but inability to say more, and he cried out— "No, no, no! you are not my *friend*! "you shall not be my friend.—How *poor*, "how *abject* a boon is *friendship*, for him to "solicit, who has aspired to the exquisite "bliss of loving, of being beloved, of calling "you his own for ever—Keep your *friend- "ship*, bestow it with your hand and your "heart;

"heart; the gift will be incomplete without it—cherish my memory with gratitude, but I charge you do not cherish it with *friendſhip*—*Adieu*! the pang of ſeparation is paſſed: *farewell, Mary*—farewell Siſters! Friends, happineſs, all *farewell*!" He was gone—the flaſh of his exit was like lightning, ſo rapid, that it could not be marked.

Nothing now remains for me to communicate of this ſtrange buſineſs—ſtrange and complicated as it is, one day or other it will clear up itſelf, by ſome of thoſe *many* cauſes, that muſt naturally combine to form a myſtery ſo aſtoniſhing—The wheels and ſprings cannot *all* be good, and when one of them happens to fail, the whole complicated fabric muſt be expoſed, which at preſent is wrapped up in error and darkneſs.

Surely I ſhould diſgrace the heart of your Mary, by concealing from you the many tears of ſenſibility ſhe has let fall to the memory of Lexington's defection from

her,

her, and from his *country*; but they are not like those of a selfish mourner's, who can feel only for themselves—they are given in much greater profusion to the woes of *others*, than to her *own* distresses.

This dear victim to the caprice of man's unsteady affection, now devotes her whole attention to the good Duke, who, after a very restless, agitated night, was this morning, or rather yesterday, for it is now three o'clock, and Saturday is already three hours in advance—Well then, yesterday it was, that this second stroke, more alarming than the former, took place. I will not flatter your Ladyship, by saying much hope is entertained of his recovery; but the Faculty do not scruple to pronounce that *possibility* remains, though *probability* is excluded.

I am still in Grosvenor Square—if I am not a useful member of the family, I am certainly gratified by seeing that it is in my power to give some small degree of comfort to the Duchess, whose affection for her

her husband is not the least amiable feature of her mind. She knows he has had a stroke, but thinks it the first; so that though her terrors are stronger than my own, her hopes of his doing well are also much more sanguine.

A messenger was dispatched to Dover, but Lexington was sailed. The express, who received his direction from Lord Francis, was ordered to proceed no further if he did not come up with him there; and I have only just now heard of his return to town, and the ill-success of his journey.

I embraced your beloved two hours ago, for not till one o'clock did she leave the Duke's room. I have caused a bed to be put up in her apartment for myself, and am at this present moment not three yards from where she is sleeping sweetly and soundly. I have looked in upon her with admiration and affection, such only as you can feel, ten times since I kissed her and wished her a good night.

Your

Your Grand-daughter's meſſages of duty, love, and I know not what, are ſo many, that I muſt poſtpone them, if I would get any refreſhment from ſleep before I am called down to breakfaſt; but this will be no loſs to you, for to-morrow Mary will make your Ladyſhip ample amends, by the exertions of her own for the omiſſions of my pen.

I am, deareſt Lady Auberry, with much more than modern ſincerity, the warmeſt admirer of your virtues, and the trueſt of your friends.

J. PETWORTH.

LETTER

LETTER XL.

Mrs. Oxhurſt to Sir Aſhton Montague.

April 13, 17—

O yes, to be ſure, you are a notable caterer for your *own neceſſities*—and the *pleaſures* creep, creep, creep—do you think ever to get on, thou *man-ſlug*, at *this* pace? Dame Fortune ſerves the cauſe of Auberry a thouſand times better than you do—I ſhall ſtick to *her*, and leave you as far behind me in *execution*, as you muſt allow yourſelf to be already in *talents*.

I have no *particular* wiſh to pleaſe *that* half-mad, half-fool ſprig of nobility after all, if it pleaſes *him* to be wholly *mad*, wholly *fool*. If he intends to marry, when

he

he can, *that* odious, cenſorious prude, Mary Montague, who I hate with all my *heart*, all my *ſoul*, and all my *ſtrength*. I will put *ſuch* a ſpoke in his *wheel*, that it ſhall not whirl him to his deſtruction ſo ſwiftly as he imagines.——But more of this when we meet.

I want you to tell me what you are about—I have not had a line from you ſince your laſt conference with my dear little Andrew Solemn.—How well do the name and the face of that excellent actor agree together? I really envy him the maſk of wiſdom, under which he does ſo much more buſineſs, in the way of miſchief, than can be done where one has the misfortune to carry about a goſſipping countenance, which blabs all the tittle-tattle that paſſes in the mind:—Perhaps a medium is better than either—ſuch a one, for inſtance, as my own, open but not ſilly, playful but not wicked; it is a charming letter of recommendation, a wonderful good decoy—many a romantic Miſs does it draw in to

tell

tell me all her ſecrets, which I never meddle with afterwards, unleſs I can turn them to my *own* advantage; and *that* is a pretty univerſal privilege amongſt females.

Somebody ſays,

To give a young gentleman right education,
The army's the only good ſchool in the nation.

Now I ſay,

To give a young damſel a right education,
This town is the only good ſchool in the nation.

Oh, what a difference is there between your *puritan* couſin and your *lively* friend! *She* has been nurſed up in the lap of her old dandling Grandmother—*I* rocked in the delicious cradle of pleaſure;—*ſhe* crammed, like a Dorking fowl, with the force-meat of prudence;—*I* gently fed with honey from the ſoft hands of luxury;—*her* lullabys were all ſung to Grandmamma's old tune of diſcretion—*mine*, airs of conqueſt, ſet to the muſic of triumph;—*ſhe* has been ſouſed over head and ears in

rivers

rivers of wisdom to fish for obsolete duties—*I* paddling down the stream of dissipation, to make me forget *them*—now, which do you think has the best of it? *She* who is afraid of *every thing*—or *I* who am afraid of *nothing*—but I have a fine story to tell you, when I come to it; I mean the heads only, as the rest I suppose you will see in the *World*, the *Herald*, and all the other papers; for *there* I am certain the whole, and perhaps more than the whole, will appear oftener than once at full length.

These *newspapers*, Montague, after all, are the *most* delightful *things* in the world—without them, so charmingly wicked and witty, upon certain occasions, where one does not choose to appear as an *ostensible* party—for *instance*, suppose an insignificant *anybody* was to take it into her head, that *you* or *I*, or Master Solemn, or half a score more of us, had been plotting mischief against *her*, and should be *impertinent* enough to *tell us so*—to call upon

us

us *openly*, to defend *ourſelves*, actually put the libel into *print*, and ſign it with her *own name*—ſuch a daring ſummons, you know, might in *ſome* caſes puzzle the very *wiſeſt* men and women, if they have not ſomething ready to ſay for themſelves pretty much to the *purpoſe*; but as long as theſe *divine* creatures, the *editors* of new papers, are ſo good to ſlip us into a corner, and circulate *our* ſquibs through ten thouſand hands of a morning, we muſt be *dunces* indeed, if, fighting behind a *buſh*, we do not come off with *victory*: the worſt of it is, theſe gentlemen editors are ſometimes a little *too* conſcientious, and if the paragraph is *ſtrongly* worded, they will refuſe to take it without a *name*, that is rather inconvenient; for *ſatire*, wanting ſtrength, is as dull as *epigram* without point.

I told you of our *love feaſt* in Grolvenor Square; it was the *ſeaſoning* of my laſt letter—the *laſt* of this muſt be to tell you, that it ended laſt Friday, as all *love feaſts* muſt end *ſooner* or *later*—it is true, Montague;

tague; will you dare to deny the fact?—O Lord! there is not even a crumb of comfort remaining to me, of any love feaſt I have had the felicity to be engaged in—I ſuppoſe Lexington, and his *pride*, grew tired of looking at each other, like the two figures over St. Dunſtan's clock, or the giants at Guildhall—now I am not at all certain that the eyes of theſe good people do any of them turn towards each other—however, *you* muſt ſuppoſe what *I* ſuppoſe, and the ſimile will do very well.

Expound me this riddle—What is it that kindles the quickeſt, burns the fierceſt, and goes out the ſoonеſt?—for fear your *inexperience*, as to the nature of *this* immaterial *ſomething*, ſhould ſet you puzzling to find it out, I will tell you, it is the *ardour* of a lover. I never ſaw any thing *burn* as they did in the eyes of Lexington at the *love feaſt*, or go out ſo *rapidly* as on the day he ſet off for the Continent.

I hap-

I happened to pop in upon them when they were all together by the ears—Lexington's situation put me in mind of a poor rat in an assembly of cats, all scratching and clawing the distressed animal without mercy—I was infinitely delighted with the drollery of the scene—it came, as all joys must come, to make us relish them in perfection, that is to say, by *surprise*; yet I believe the pleasure I felt to witness the humiliation of that *saint* in *buckram*, your *pious* cousin, Mary, was very little inferior to those transports with which I saw Lexington make his escape, with the velocity of a rocket from the *fangs* and *claws* of his pursuing *puss-cat* family—I like his sisters; they are like myself, a good sort of people, and not at all infatuated by Miss Montague's *universal* powers of fascination.

I suppose you know that the dandling Duke has had a *stroke* of something—I don't know what—but they say it will be the death of him; and no great matter, a

better

letter muſt reign in his *ſtead*; at leaſt, rather better than poor old *yea* and *nay*.

Montague; I will never forgive you, if I have not a letter ſoon, and all *about it*; you underſtand me—your ſilence has ſeriouſly given me offence; and, like heaven, I pardon none but *penitent* ſinners—I wonder if I ſhall ever *repent*—I fear the *thing* is impoſſible. Adieu!

CAR. OSBURN.

LETTER

LETTER XLI.

Miſs Montague to Lady Auberry.

April 13, 17—

WHAT ſhall I ſay to my deareſt Grandmamma of Lady Jane Petworth's goodneſs to your grateful Mary; if I had twenty lives, and if I was to lay them all down for this angel woman, ſtill I ſhould be her debtor.

It is impoſſible for language to expreſs the millionth part of her kindneſs to me—how ſhould I have held up my head, on a *late* occaſion, but for her encouraging preſence—or how ſhould I have been capable of telling you what paſſed on *that* occaſion?—Lady Jane has laid all the par-

ticulars before you—thank God! you know them *all!* and my mind is relieved from a burthen that preſſed it with ſadneſs.

What are diſappointments? What are mortifications? they could viſit me in no very frightful ſhape, if I might be allowed to bear them ſingly—but when I conſider, that the lightning which ſcorches the *branch*, does not ſpare the *root*, then it is that the arrows of grief are freſh pointed, and my heart is pierced with the apprehenſion of *your* feeling more *for* me than I really feel *for* myſelf—the moment I ſee under your dear hands theſe words—"*Mary, I am ſatisfied with your conduct, and not grieved at your diſappointment,*" that moment I ſhall find my ſerenity reſtored, and no cloud of *dejection* ſhall afterwards be conjured up to *obſcure* my joys, or *diſturb* my tranquillity.

Lady Jane, who never opens her lips but to diſpenſe comfort, has juſt called in upon me; and looking over what I have

have written, gives me ſo much encouragement to *hope* that you will think little or nothing of the *ſtrange* affair, that I am really convinced ſhe is in the right; I ſhall therefore ſet about my own *reformation*, on the mere authority of her Lady-ſhip's aſſertions, without waiting to have them confirmed by yourſelf.

I will confeſs, that yeſterday, and the day before I was *very* ſilly; I did not exert my ſpirits as I ſhould have done, to combat the vexations that weighed them down; but I have this excuſe for my weakneſs, that when I ſuffered my mind to become the prey of melancholy, Mr. Lexington had not *all* the merit of making me unhappy; upon my word, I experienced a great deal more for the Duke's ſtate of extreme danger: to day his ſymptoms, thank God, are mended; the phyſicians ſay there is much probability he will be reſtored to us.

Lady Jane has told you the warm and generous ſupport I have met with, both

from his Grace and the Ducheſs: judge then what were my feelings of diſtreſs, when *one* of theſe dear protectors was ſo near being taken from me, and the other of being reduced to ſorrowful ſolitary widowhood, by an accident, which, though I could not prevent, originated from *my* unfortunate ſituation in *their* family. Well! that is *now* over: the *Duke* will recover; the *Ducheſs* will not be a widow—theſe were ugly ſpectres of horror, but they diſappear; my ſpirits mount, and my terrors are vaniſhed with them.

Have I ever been a diſſembler, my indulgent parent? No, that thought ſhould be driven from my heart; that could not ſtand the teſt of your partial examination—I think more of Mr. Lexington, than perhaps I ought to do: yet I bluſh not to tell you ſo—you will find no faulty weakneſs lurking at the bottom of this confeſſion—I have ſifted it thoroughly; it is a ſentiment of compaſſion, unmixed with any other wiſh or deſire, than for his reſtoration

tion to peace. I ſhould certainly never have accepted the propoſals, with that very ſmall portion of preference, which could allow me to relinquiſh my views of happineſs in the attachment he profeſſed for me with *mere* regret, *cold* phlegmatic *regret.* The tears I have ſhed witneſs for me that I have felt much *more* than regret in parting for ever with Mr. Lexington—the treachery of Lord Auberry did not coſt me half the ſorrow that I have known within the three laſt days. I was a mere child when I perſuaded myſelf to believe his inſidious proteſtations; the inſults with which he treated me did not enter into my mind with the ſame pungent ſharpneſs that thoſe do to which I have lately been ſubjected. I can forgive Lord Auberry; I can receive him as a relation; would he but own his marriage—I can *pity*, yet I cannot *forgive* Mr. Lexington: how comes it that I am not able to underſtand or tranſlate this extraordinary language of the heart—ah! dear Grandmamma, I

will think of him no more, if I can help it—but I muſt ſpeak of him a little longer.

When I went in to the Ducheſs, before Lady Jane and I ſat down to breakfaſt, I found, on enquiring, how her Grace had reſted; that ſhe complained of having paſſed a ſleepleſs night, which ſhe attributed to her woman having told her, juſt as ſhe was going to bed, that the Duke had ſent orders for his lawyers to attend him this day at one o'clock. "I fear (ſaid "ſhe), the Duke means to diſinherit his "nephew; and though nobody in the world "can be more *angry* with him than *I am*, "yet my dear Miſs Montague, you will "not, I am ſure, accuſe me of any diſ-"reſpect to *you*, by ſaying, I do not wiſh "him to be *quite* ſo much puniſhed, as to "loſe the largeſt part of his Uncle's pro-"perty, which it is in his power to ſever "from the dukedom."

Can you not gueſs what was the anſwer of your Mary—do you not ſee me in the act

act of kiſſing her Grace's hand, thanking —praiſing—loving her better than I ever loved her before—did ſhe not deſerve it?—indeed I could have fallen at her feet, to announce my gratitude for her kind conſideration, in what ſo eventually concerns the intereſt of the Duke's nephew: had he even been her own ſon, and under the diſpleaſure of his father, this anxiety to reinſtate him, would, in my opinion, have loſt more than half its merit: ſhe was pleaſed with the ardency of my approbation, and bid me, when I went to the Duke's apartment, find out, if I could, what were his real intentions; as ſhe had yet no other grounds for her apprehenſions, but his ſending for the lawyer, who it was poſſible might be wanted on buſineſs which had no reference to poor Lexington. "Indeed, my dear (added "her Grace), though I condemn, I am "*ſorry* for him; the fooliſh boy muſt have "got himſelf into ſome ſcrape or other,"

" that will not at preſent allow him to ful-
" fill his engagements to *you*; nevertheleſs,
" I plainly ſee he *ſtill* loves you to diſ-
" traction."

" I ſhould be extremely ſorry for *that*
" (ſaid I), becauſe it would only create
" to himſelf an *additional* cauſe for un-
" eaſineſs."

" Why *ſurely* Miſs Montague, *if* he *was*
" at liberty to *renew* his propoſals, which
" I have no doubt he one day or other
" *will* do, *you* would not be ſo cruel to
" *reject* them."

" I could not be ſo cruel to myſelf, as
" to accept them."

" Piſh, child, you are talking abſolute
" *nonſenſe*; I permit you to feel as much
" reſentment for him at *preſent* as you
" pleaſe; but I ſhould think you a little
" idiot, if you could not forgive *one* fault,
" where there are ſo many advantages to
" counterbalance it. *Ducal* coronets do
" not grow on the tree of peerage, like
" pippins

" pippins in the garden of a peaſant; every " title is not a Duke—nor every man who " wears it a Lexington."

" Then, dear Ducheſs, leſs *honors*, and " leſs *merit*, muſt content *me*; for never, " never will I be the wife of Mr. Lex- " ington."

" How like a pretty Miſs you are talk- " ing; but get you gone, and when you " have been to breakfaſt, go to the Duke, " and find out what he wants with the " lawyer."

I told Lady Jane all that had paſſed, and ſhe was highly diverted with our amicable conteſt: ſhe too had her *doubts* as well as the Ducheſs, that if I *could* I *would*; but I took *more* pains to convince her Ladyſhip than her Grace, and ſhe is *now* ſatisfied, not only that I would be *firm* in the midſt of temptation, but that my firmneſs is built on a rational foun- dation.

I had riſen rather late; my converſation with her Grace, and the time taken up

over the tea-table, brought it to ſomething more than half after twelve, before I got to the Duke's chamber.

The curtains of his bed were cloſed on that ſide next the door, and I walked ſoftly for fear of diſturbing him; his valet, who was waiting in the room, ſaw me enter, and the next moment went out, ſaying, "His Grace is not aſleep, Madam." I then left off my creeping pace, and drew near the ſide of his bed.

He was ſitting up ſupported by pillows, a dreſſing gown thrown over his ſhoulders, his night-cap laying on the quilt, and the old brown ſcratch wig, that he always wears, except on levee or drawing-room occaſions, was replaced on his head; the curtains were thrown open oppoſite the windows, as was one of the ſaſhes—the whole appearance of himſelf, and the apartment, was ſo very different from what I had ſeen them a few hours before, when *one* ſeemed to be verging on eternity, and the *other* to repreſent the chamber

ber of death, that I was ſtruck almoſt with as much ſurpriſe, as if I had been the witneſs of a reſurrection.

A ſmall writing table, on which was pens, ink, and ſome parcels of paper tied round with red tape, was placed cloſe by his ſide; a large book reſted on his knees; a folded paper lay upon it. He was going to write; he held the pen in his hand, and was ruminating on his ſubject with ſo much attention, that, till I ſpoke, he had no idea that I was ſo near him.

In reply to my warm expreſſions of joy at finding him recovered ſo much beyond the moſt ſanguine of my hopes, he ſaid, "Yes, my dear child, it has pleaſed God "to lengthen my date of life a little "longer; long enough, *I* hope, to per- "form an act of juſtice, and then I ſhall "be ſatisfied: ſit down, that I may have "the pleaſure of looking at you, and "hearing you ſpeak; for by and by I "ſhall be forced to ſend you away."

" And why am I to be ſent away, dear " Duke? Is my dutiful attendance grown " a burthen to you?"

" No; my good girl, no: but I muſt " be in private for a time, with a perſon " who comes to me on *material* buſineſs; " I do not expect him this half hour, and " till *then* I will indulge myſelf with your " company."

" But your Grace was going to write; " ſhall I gueſs on what ſubject; and, if I " am not wrong in my conjectures, let me " go now, and return again when you are " more at leiſure; ſo charming a proof " of your goodneſs, of which all the be- " nefit will reſult on myſelf, ſhould not be " delayed a moment."

" I meant to have written, it is true, " but my hand I find is not yet ſufficiently " ſteady for the purpoſe; I can as well " *give* my directions verbally, as *write* " them; but how comes it that you are " able to gueſs at my intentions?"

" Becauſe,

"Becauſe, my Lord, there is nothing "in the world that makes people ſo keen "ſighted, as the ſelfiſh wiſh of promoting "their own intereſt: Will you try me? "will you juſt let me draw out a rough "ſketch of your kind meaning, and if I "do not give the exact tranſcript of your "Grace's heart, without aſking one lead-"ing queſtion, the mortification my error "muſt bring with it, will be abundant "puniſhment for my preſumption."

He looked ſurpriſed—"Remember, "Miſs Montague, you are to put yourſelf "in *my* ſituation, and to *give* exactly the "*ſame* inſtruction as I ſhould have *given*; "I admire your numberleſs talents, but "this of divination being a new one, it "raiſes my curioſity to diſcover whether "it be as worthy of admiration as the "reſt."

"Yes (ſaid I), you ſhall find me a true "propheteſs; I will tranſlate your moſt "hidden thoughts, and give the very in-

"ſtructions

" ſtructions you yourſelf, or the *matureſt* " conſideration, would have given."

I ſat down, took up a pen, and in two ſeconds wrote as follows:

It is the Duke of Cleveland's inſtructions to the beſt of human hearts, that all paſſions deſtructive to its internal peace ſhall be forthwith baniſhed the citadel; and that the gates of reconciliation be thrown open for the triumphal entry of mercy, forgiveneſs, affection, *and* the orphan ſon of his brother.

The Duke was impatient to ſee what I had written; I put the paper into his hands; I cannot tell you what followed; I can only ſay, I gained a complete victory, but I muſt be ſilent as to the flattering honours by which it was attended; my vanity is not equal to a repetition of them.

The Ducheſs and Lady Jane were no ſooner informed of my ſucceſs, than they alſo conferred on me a thouſand, a thouſand

ſand praiſes—and for what? Why, for having made Mr. Lexington's peace with his Uncle—was it not the very beſt poſſible means by which I could obtain my own approbation, and of courſe ſecure my own felicity.

How I long for your next letter—but, oh, how much more ardently do I long to be preſſed in your ſheltering arms, and to receive the ſiſterly embraces of that amiable friend, who, in all tender attentions to my beloved parent, is the ſubſtitute of your dutiful, grateful, and affectionate

MARY MONTAGUE.

INCLINATION

INCLINATION again aſſails me to ſtep once more into the road of narrative—the ſubſtance of the next three or four letters will anſwer my purpoſe better than the letters themſelves. With my readers intereſt therefore in view, I ſhall perform the office of a pioneer, to go before them, and take away all the impediments that would otherwiſe obſtruct their paſſage to the end of ambiguity on the memoirs of Mary.

I NOW bend my ſteps towards the pleaſant retirement of Lady Auberry, and throw open the gates of Riverſdale for the reception of all ſuch travellers as are willing to turn out of the path of faſhion, and reſt awhile under the ſhade of domeſtic occurrences.

On the day when Lady Jane Petworth's long letter, which conveyed the ſurpriſing intelligence of Mr. Lexington's deſertion, came

came to the hands of Lady Auberry, Miſs Beauly and the Chaplain were gone on a charitable viſit to Dame Eſtrage, who had ſent at the dawn of day to deſire ſhe might ſpeak to them before ſhe died; feeling, as ſhe declared, that her end was approaching, they haſtened to obey the ſummons, but came *too* late; it was all over with the poor woman five minutes before their carriage drove up to the door of her cottage.

A girl, who had been long hired, and was paid by Miſs Montague for attending her old nurſe, came out, weeping bitterly, and invited them in very kindly to look at the corpſe, but they civily refuſed her courteſy, and enquired, amongſt many other things reſpecting her late miſtreſs, if any of her ſons were with her at the time of her deceaſe;—Samuel (which was the eldeſt) had been with his mother about two hours before ſhe departed, and then added, miſtreſs talked deſperate long to him; and I heard her ſay, if his Reverence

rence, and your Ladyſhip, did not come till ſhe was dead, he muſt go and tell you ſomething—I don't know what—or ſhe ſhould never die in no peace at all.

Greatly ſhocked at the circumſtance of her ſudden death, they returned to Riverſdale, expecting to have found Lady Auberry in the breakfaſt room—ſhe was not there—they thought ſhe might be retired to her cloſet, and ſat down to wait for her return.—"This event (ſaid Miſs "Beauly), ſo unexpected, will give her "Ladyſhip, as well as Miſs Montague, a "great deal of concern; we muſt break "it to them as gently as we can."—A letter that lay on the table, attracted her notice; ſhe immediately took it up; it was from her aunt, and the ſame that has already made its appearance in this hiſtory—Mr. Sanford would have retired as ſhe broke the ſeal; but having caſt her eyes over the two firſt lines, ſhe called after him, "For God ſake, Sir, come back."—He did as ſhe deſired him, and aſked haſtily,

haſtily, "What was the matter?" Seeing her tremble, and looking as pale as aſhes— "*that* I cannot tell you (ſhe replied), but "ſomething *very* frightful has happened; "read this," and ſhe put the letter into his hand.

Beſides being the domeſtic chaplain of Lady Auberry, Mr. Sanford was likewiſe the pariſh prieſt of her village; all the early and middle part of his life he had been buffetted by afflictions of every deſcription, all of which he ſupported with ſuch perfect and chearful reſignation to the will of Divine Providence, as might have been called unprecedented, had not the ſame ſubmiſſive virtues equally predominated in the bright example of his noble patroneſs.

"Oh! (exclaimed Miſs Beauly), what "is this blow that threatens to deſtroy the "proſpects, the hopes of Lady Auberry, "dear eſtimable Lady Auberry! whatever "it is, you are already informed of it; "but

" but was you prepared for its recep-
" tion?"

" Fear not, my good Miſs Beauly (ſaid
" Sanford), ſhe who is more than a no-
" minal Chriſtian, can never be unpre-
" pared to take up the croſs:" as he ſaid this, the door opened, and Lady Auberry, with a ſmiling countenance, came out of her cloſet, leaning on her ebony headed cane—ſhe aſked them after the health of her *protegee*; and was informed by Sandford, that ſhe was taken from this life to a better.

She was ſilent for a moment—then ſaid, " God's will be done, *now* and *always*—do
" you know (continued ſhe), that I have
" had a letter from your dear Aunt this
" morning."

" Oh! Lady Auberry; how calm, how
" compoſed you are; is it poſſible my
" Aunt's letter has not afflicted you?"

" Lady Jane has told you, I perceive,
" what has happened in Groſvenor-ſquare."

" Indeed

"Indeed I am ignorant of every thing, "except her fears that the intelligence ſhe "has now ſent your Ladyſhip will not "bring with it that increaſe of ſatisfaction "ſhe always wiſhes to communicate."

"Then ſhe is miſtaken, my dear—here "is the pretty hiſtory ſhe has ſent me; go "into the next room, take Mr. Sandford "with you, and when you have read it "together, return, and tell me if I am not "more entitled to your congratulations "than to your condolence." She held out Lady Jane's packet to Miſs Beauly, who kiſſed the hand that preſented it—ſhe caſt a look at the Chaplain in ſilent wonder—he met it with another, more expreſſive of veneration than ſurpriſe; and having withdrawn long enough to go through the whole diſtreſſing recital, when they came back, no two faces ever ſpoke in ſtronger language the ſentiments each had imbibed in the peruſal—many a ſtraggling tear had eſcaped from the full eyes of Miſs Beauly, in contemplating the ſorrows

rows and the diſappointments of Mary; whilſt the reflection, how glorioufly the *ſame* Mary had ſuſtained thoſe *ſevere* trials, gave an air of exultation to the *ſombre* features of the worthy divine, which made him look ten years younger than when he left the apartment.

" My dear (ſaid Lady Auberry), I ſee " you are a very fooliſh girl, and that you " have been weeping over the tranſitory " mortification of your forſaken friend— " but what ſays Mr. Sandford—has not " my darling child nobly acquitted her- " ſelf?"

As ſhe ſaid this, a hand was graciouſly extended towards each; but before it was in the power of either to reply, a ſervant entered, and informed his lady, that a gentleman in a chaiſe and four had driven into the back yard, and ſent to requeſt the honour of half an hour's conference with her Ladyſhip on buſineſs of great importance.

She

She gave orders for his admittance, and made no objection to Mr. Sandford's hint, that he would take himſelf off; or to Miſs Beauly's walking a few turns in the garden, whilſt the ſtranger was to receive his audience—the name of this ſtranger had been demanded by the ſervant, who brought up the meſſage, but he ſaid it was of no conſequence to ſend in his name, as he had not the honour of being known to Lady Auberry,

There was in the figure, countenance, air, and addreſs of the *gentleman* without a name, who now made his appearance, a ſomething that gave her Ladyſhip very favourable prepoſſeſſions of his rank and education; but before *ſhe* is re-ſeated, or *he* has taken the place ſhe offers him next to her own, I ſhall preſent him at full length to the notice of my readers.

His height was of the talleſt middle ſize—his perſon thin—his complexion ſallow—his eyes dark and penetrating—his countenance ſedate, with certain impreſſions of

of melancholy, beſt deſcribed in the portraits of the unfortunate royal race of *Stuarts*; indeed the whole *contour* of his face very much reſembles all the original pictures I have ever ſeen of *that* family.

Lady Auberry marked the reception ſhe gave him, with the ſtate of ancient and the eaſe of modern good breeding, which he returned by the moſt maſterly ſtrokes of politeneſs; ſaid ſo many civil things of Riverſdale, its plantations, its ſituation, and the beauty of the country through which he had travelled for the laſt thirty miles, that the good old lady, who was prouder of her caſtle than of any other object in the world, except her Granddaughter, ſeemed, in the gratification he afforded her, to have forgot ſhe had never ſeen him before, and that he came to her, as was ſignified by his own meſſage, upon buſineſs of *importance*—but the gentleman was truly a gentleman *of* buſineſs; it was therefore his affair to remember what he came about.

" I am

"I am always ſorry, Madam, ſaid Mr. "Solemn," (for it was no other than the learned Mr. *Andrew Solemn*, the friend and factotum both of Lord Francis, Lexington, and Sir Aſhton Montague, who was now addreſſing himſelf to Lady Auberry, having announced his name to her before I announced it to my readers.) "I "am always infinitely concerned (ſaid "Maſter Solemn), when ſo ancient a "houſe as this has no *lineal* deſcendant to "ſupport its dignities; and ſince I have "had the honour of converſing with your "Ladyſhip, I particularly regret it in *this* "inſtance—I am informed your Ladyſhip "never had a ſon, and that a branch of "the Pledells has ſucceeded to the late "Earl's titles and eſtates."

"You are well informed, Sir; one "daughter was the only fruit of my mar-"riage; and that one—" Lady Auberry pauſed—it was the pauſe of tender recollection, and perfectly convenient to the man of buſineſs; who took the opportunity

of her ſilence, to obſerve, in a voice of ſympathy, that the death of Lady Mary Pledell was, on *many* accounts, independent of her Ladyſhip's *maternal* feelings, one of the *moſt* unfortunate events that could have happened.

" O, Sir! (ſhe replied) I have been " long a pupil in the ſchool of misfortune, " and muſt have been a profound dunce, " if by this time I had not learnt the " leſſon of ſubmiſſion—I have ceaſed to " repine at the early fate of my ſainted " daughter; *ſhe* is bleſſed, and through " the lovely child of her marriage with " Colonel Montague, I am bleſſed alſo."

Maſter Solemn drew out his handkerchief, turned aſide his head, and wiped his dry eyes.

" You are very humane, Sir, and I am " a fool to trouble you with my domeſtic " concerns; your kindneſs led me into an " error; I can hardly perſuade myſelf that " *this* is the firſt time I have had the plea- " ſure of ſeeing you."

She

She offered him refreſhments, but he declined them, having breakfaſted at the laſt ſtage.

Another moment of ſilence enſued; it was broken by the lawyer, who, with *much* ceremony, *more* compliments, and *greater* cunning, "hoped her Ladyſhip, who he "was happy to find poſſeſſed the moſt "liberal mind in the world, would pardon "him, if, as a *profeſſional* man, he was "under the painful neceſſity of offending "her delicacy, by propoſing a *few* queſ- "tions, which the duty he owed his client "*forced* him to aſk: though (added he) the "*reſpect*, the *reverence* in which I *now* hold "the character of Lady Auberry, will "make it the *moſt* diſguſting affair I have "ever yet undertaken in the whole courſe "of my practice."

"And what are theſe queſtions you are "afraid to aſk me? (ſaid ſhe, with a ſmile ſo full of benevolence, as might have conciliated the affections of an angel, or ſtopped a devil in his progreſs of miſ-

chief—but it did not ſtop Mr. Andrew Solemn)—" What are they, Sir, being " already eſtabliſhed in my good opinion, " as a gentleman and a man of underſtand- " ing, you have as little reaſon to fear my " diſpleaſure, as I have to apprehend you " will go a ſtep beyond the boundaries of " perfect good manners, in the queſtions " you mean to propoſe, and I am really " impatient to give you every proof you " may require of my confidence."

" Your Ladyſhip is all condeſcenſion; " the nature of my buſineſs, it is true, " does not entitle me to *ſuch* diſtinguiſhing " marks of your goodneſs—but, Madam, " men of *my* profeſſion, muſt endeavour " to acquit themſelves with impartiality— " not the virtues *even* of a Lady Auberry, " though they have the *higheſt* claim on " my veneration, muſt *bias* me to follow " the *lead* of my inclinations, rather than " perform the diſagreeable taſk I have un- " dertaken for my client."

" Sir

"Sir Aſhton Montague—there does not,
"in my opinion, exiſt a more worthy,
"*honourable* man than Sir Aſhton; how-
"ever, he might have been miſled by
"wrong information; which this *amicable*
"conference with your Ladyſhip will, I
"*hope*, enable me to do away, to the ſatis-
"faction of all parties."

"Pray, good Sir, no more apologies;
"you have raiſed my curioſity; what are
"the commands you bring me from Sir
"Aſhton Montague?—I have heard my
"late ſon-in-law had ſuch a relation, but
"have never ſeen his perſon to the beſt of
"my recollection."

"Yet, doubtleſs, your Ladyſhip muſt
"have *heard*, that had Colonel Montague
"died without iſſue, the Baronet was next
"in the entail, and ſix thouſand pounds a
"year, Madam—"

"Well, Sir, I allow ſix thouſand pounds
"a year (interrupting him with a ſort of
"ironical pleaſantry), is not a matter to be
"deſpiſed, even by a gentleman, who has,

" I am told, three times as much of his " own—ſuch an addition might have added " to his weight in the ſenate, and brought " with it many *other* advantages, if Colonel " Montague, when he married my daugh- " ter, Lady Mary Pledell, had not im- " peded his views of aggrandiſement, by " leaving an infant, who not only inherits " under the ſettlement, there being no bar " againſt females, but alſo by the laſt teſta- " ment of her father, who had the right of " bequeathing the moment he had a child " born alive; and *theſe* are the *only* obſta- " cles in the world that I know of, which " can poſſibly prevent *your* client from " diſpoſſeſſing *my* Grand-daughter: and " now, Sir, I wait your further communi- " cations."

There was a dignity in the perſon, and a ſpirit of animation in the eyes of this wonderful woman, at the age of nearly fourſcore, more adequate to the purpoſe of creating reverence than inſpiring affection; if the humility of her ſoul, and the

the placidity of her diſpoſition, had not thrown over them the more engaging graces of meek and feminine ſoftneſs—this faſcinating veil had, by accident, ſlipped a little from its uſual ſtation, as ſhe was talking to Mr. Andrew Solemn.—Now this *profeſſional* gentleman had a trick of ſometimes looking on the ground, as any other *contemplative* genius may do, when he is to encounter no very contemptible adverſary; and that adverſary happens to be a perſon whom he *has* injured, or *intends* to injure. Mr. Solemn found himſelf in the very *act*, and having fixed his ſight downwards, whilſt Lady Auberry was ſpeaking, he did not chooſe to be at the trouble of raiſing it any more, as long as he continued in her preſence.

" Yet (ſaid he) I hope to be the means " of accommodating this *little* miſunder- " ſtanding, to the ſatisfaction of all par- " ties.—Was your Ladyſhip preſent when " the ceremony of marriage was performed

" between Colonel Montague and Lady " Mary Pledell?"

" Do you come here, Sir, to *diſpute* " the validity of their marriage."

" By no means, Madam; my utmoſt " endeavours ſhall be uſed to ſubſtantiate " the *fact*, and to diſabuſe my client, who, " as I hinted before, muſt certainly have " ſuffered himſelf to be *impoſed* upon— " reports, Madam—reports are *ugly* things " —much *miſchief* often reſults from re- " ports."

" You are perfectly incomprehenſible, " Sir; *how* has Sir Aſhton Montague been " impoſed on, and *what* are the reports " by which you *ſuppoſe* he has been de- " ceived?"

" Such as it is always in your Ladyſhip's " power to ſilence—Lady Auberry cannot " be without authentic *vouchers* of her " daughter's marriage, and the *birth* of her " Grand-daughter."

" You muſt ſpeak ſtill plainer, Sir; I " am paſſed the age, when the acuteneſs

" of

" of imagination can ſupply the defects of " language; what I demand from you is " information, *unequivocal* information."

" Firſt, permit me to aſſure you, Ma- " dam, that after the polite reception you " have honoured me with, my *delicacy* " revolts at the thoughts of ſaying any " thing that can give *you* diſpleaſure; yet " what am I, in this diſagreeable buſineſs, " but the agent of another; was I acting " officially for my own intereſt, I would " reſign *all* my pretenſions, *however* ſan- " guine, *rather* than be the object of *your* " reſentment for a moment."

" Nay, Sir, do not fear; my reſent- " ment will fall on either yourſelf or your " employer: if Sir Aſhton can *poſſibly* " conceive, that he has been plundered by " *me*, he has a *right* to ſeek redreſs; and " you, as a very able lawyer, have a right " to *ſupport* his claims. I feel nothing but " curioſity to know on what foundation " he has built them upon, and expect to " be gratified with the fulleſt ſatisfaction

" on this point, that it is in your power to " give me."

" It appears, Madam, by my client's " inſtructions, he has lately received *cer-* " *tain* information, that there *are* circum- " ſtances attending the ſuppoſed union " between Lady Mary Pleydell and Colo- " nel Montague, which, if *eſtabliſhed*, may " render the *validity* of ſuch a marriage " doubtful."—He pauſed.

" I pray you, good Sir, do not *ſuppoſe* " that I am in my *dotage*; do not treat me " like an *infant*; I have yet enough of " external ſtrength and internal fortitude " remaining, to ſupport me under theſe " *weighty* circumſtances, or to caſt the " burden of them from me; to blow down " all Sir Aſhton's airy ſchemes, with as " much eaſe as I could bruſh away the " manufactory of that *poor* ſpider, who you " may ſee at this moment outſide my win- " dow ſo buſily *ſpinning* his *web* in the " ſun-beams."

" There

" There is no doubt—it cannot admit of " a doubt—at leaſt to me, Madam—that " your Ladyſhip is provided with *ample* " proofs of refutation; *but* yet I muſt ſay " in behalf of my client, whilſt there *is* a " chance, a *poſſible* chance that your Lady- " ſhip may have been *deceived*, it will be " *juſtice* to acquit him of *intentional* diſ- " reſpect, even on the very ſcore of ſelf- " preſervation, and the duties *every* man " of *honour* muſt owe to his ſucceeding " generation, that none of *their* lawful " property ſhall be laid *waſte*, or *relin-* " *quiſhed*."

" Upon my word, Mr. Solemn, I " thought I was ſpeaking to a mere *lawyer*, " but I find you a *ſpecial pleader*."

" I wiſh to make every thing *agreeable* " to your Ladyſhip, yet *not* to neglect the " intereſt of my client."

" And you ſucceed mighty well in your " *firſt* wiſh; for what is there *more* agree- " able to the ears of a *proud* and *happy*

" parent, than to be told, in the moſt *flat-*
" *tering* and *delicate* terms, that it may not
" be *impoſſible* to prove *her* daughter was a
" *proſtitute.* I believe, Sir, when diveſt-
" ed of all *ſuperfluous* expreſſions, *ſuch* to
" be the *whole* meaning of your buſineſs
" with me."

" I am ſhocked—ſurpriſed—confound-
" ed—would Lady Auberry—I ſay Madam
" —would your Ladyſhip ſhew leſs offence
" at my *honeſt* intentions, I might—I
" ſhould—I truſt it may be done—I would
" convince Lady Auberry with what pro-
" found reſpect—I am her moſt obedient
" humble ſervant."

" Of that I am already ſo well con-
" vinced, Sir, that I ſhall deſire your im-
" mediate return to Sir Aſhton Montague,
" with this meſſage from the Dowager
" Counteſs of Auberry, that though ſhe
" does not chooſe to give *his* agent any
" *private* information, reſpecting her *do-*
" *meſtic* affairs, ſhe has *no* objection to a
" public

" public *inveſtigation* of them, whenever " ſhe is ſummoned to anſwer him in a court " of juſtice."

Lady Auberry roſe from her chair—ſo did Maſter Andrew Solemn; ſhe bent her knees, he bent his eyes ſtill more firmly on the carpet; ſhe preſerved the haughty ſilence of inſulted virtue, he of conſcious detection; ſhe pulled the bell—a ſervant ſhewed himſelf at the door—" Or- " der this gentleman's carriage."—" It is " ready, my Lady."—" Very well—my " ſervant waits to conduct you, Sir; I " wiſh you a pleaſant journey;"—and having forgot her ebony headed cane, that lay on the window-ſeat, ſhe paſſed into the next apartment with the alacrity of a nymph, and the dignity of an empreſs, while the mortified lawyer made his exit at the oppoſite door.

He had it not in his inſtructions to make a forcible entry on the premiſes, and being commanded to quit, he, with his ſallow viſage, conſiderably lengthened, made

made the beſt of his way back to the place from whence he came, to relate his interview with the ſtately miſtreſs of Riverſdale caſtle.

The deſign of this viſit being rather to give than receive intelligence, there could not be much of diſappointment in its conſequence. To trample under foot honour—juſtice—humanity—if they ſtood in the way of intereſt, was no crime; but to offend againſt the laws of politeneſs was unneceſſary: and it was for the ſake of politeneſs merely, that Lady Auberry was appriſed of Sir Aſhton Montague's intentions to deſtroy the fame of her daughter, and the fortune of her Grand-daughter.

Not to have given her notice of the impending miſchief, but to let it come upon her too abruptly, would have been uncivil, and incivility made no part in the compoſition of Mr. Andrew Solemn.—Sir Aſhton Montague, though not ſo much the votary of *etiquette*, conſented to his taking the journey, becauſe, he ſaid, it would

would inſure the applauſe of the world; and without the world's applauſe, his good fortune would looſe half its value. Mr. Solemn convinced him how neceſſary it was, that every body ſhould cry out, how nobly the right heir conducted himſelf to the ſuppoſitious heireſs, in allowing her ſo long a time to prepare for her defence—he was convinced—and will not all men run after popularity, when they are ſure there is nothing to be loſt by the purſuit.

The great practical abilities of this eminent profeſſional man ſhall never be buried in oblivion, as long as I, whoſe right it is to hand down *ſuch* characters to poſterity, am thought worthy to be the hiſtorian of his ſucceſsful *rambles* through all the labyrinths of confuſed *myſteries*, and to engrave with my pen how ſucceſsfully he has made his way out with ſafety; whilſt any body, leſs ſkilled than himſelf in the turnings and windings, had infallibly been loſt to *fame*, to *honour*, and to *reputation*.

Nothing

Nothing could equal the aſtoniſhment of Mr. Sandford, and Miſs Beauley, when Lady Auberry told them who her viſitor was, and the purport of his viſit; both were actuated by the ſame ſentiment, and exclaimed in the ſame moment—What a villain!

"And to what end (ſaid her Ladyſhip, "with her uſual compoſure), miſchief is "certainly intended, but the motive for "it is paſt finding out; what have *we* to "fear, what have *they* to hope? Have not "I the licenſe, the certificate, and the "will? Have *they* any thing to bring for-"ward that can invalidate *my* claim, and "ſubſtantiate their own?"

"Your Ladyſhip, I hope, (ſaid Mr. "Sandford) will allow me to go imme-"diately, and bring hither your attorney."

"For heaven's ſake! (added Miſs "Beauley), let him be ſent for."

"I ſubmit, to quiet *your* alarms (replied "Lady Auberry), though I have none of "my own."

Mr.

Mr. Sandford waited for no further permiſſion, but ſet out directly for the houſe of Mr. Harvey, who lived only about a mile from Riverſdale, and finding him at home, they returned together in the ſhort ſpace of twenty-five minutes.

This lawyer had neither the education, abilities, nor ſplendid family connections of Mr. Andrew Solemn; yet was he nevertheleſs very much diſtinguiſhed for knowledge in his profeſſion, ſoundneſs of head, and integrity of heart.

Lady Auberry coolly, deliberately, and diſtinctly repeated to him what had paſſed in her converſation with Sir Aſhton Montague's man of buſineſs, and aſked his opinion, on what grounds he ſuppoſed it poſſible a ſuit at law ſhould be inſtituted againſt her Grand-daughter.

"I know of none (he replied, with a "bluntneſs natural to his character), pro-"vided your Ladyſhip has taken care not "to let out of your own poſſeſſion the cer-"tificate of Lady Mary's marriage."

"I have

"I have that ſafe enough, and another "of the dear child's being made a Chriſ- "tian; both theſe ſacred ceremonies were "performed in this very houſe, by the "Biſhop of S——; and I have alſo my "ſon Montague's will, by which he diſ- "poſes of all his poſſeſſions to this, the "only child of their marriage."

"Then (ſaid he), my Lady, I will "defy the devil himſelf to ſet it aſide.— "Has this will ever been recorded?"

"No; I have thought it unneceſſary, "my inclinations did not lead me to town; "and as there is no legatee but herſelf, "it is time enough to prove it in the Com- "mons, when ſhe comes of age; or if it "is never done, ſhe is equally the uni- "verſal heireſs of her father."

"I know it (ſaid he, after a moment's "conſideration), and I alſo know it muſt "be on this very circumſtance, that the "heir male has built his expectations; he "has ſearched for this reputed will of his "couſin, and not finding it regiſtered, ac-

"cording

" cording to the uſual cuſtom, he has per-
" ſuaded himſelf to doubt its exiſtence:
" his next object is the invalidating a mar-
" riage, which would ſtill more effectually
" humble his hopes of ſucceſſion; and the
" well-known fact, that the late Earl died
" uninformed of his daughter's marriage,
" or the birth of his Grand-daughter, has
" doubtleſs led him into the error of ſup-
" poſing it will not be very difficult to bear
" the iſſue of ſuch a union: beſides, I dare
" ſay he does not fail to calculate on other
" chances—in the diſtreſs of loſing Lady
" Mary, he hopes, no doubt, that your
" Ladyſhip might have neglected to take
" care of thoſe *proofs*, which I am happy
" to find you have ſo carefully and pru-
" dently preſerved."

" I will put them into your hands this
" moment (ſaid Lady Auberry)—Go, my
" dear (turning to Miſs Beauley), and
" bring the little caſket in which they are
" depoſited; here are the keys of my India
" cabinet; you will find it in the third
" drawer

"drawer on the left hand;" and then added, kiſſing the cheek of her ready meſſenger, "You will forgive me that I "ſend you upon my errands, it is your "own fault; if you did not put me ſo much "in mind of my precious Mary, I ſhould "treat you with more ceremony, but *then* "I ſhould not love you ſo well."

"God bleſs you, deareſt Lady Auberry, "for thinking my ſmall attenſions worthy "to be ranked with thoſe of Miſs Mon-"tague:" ſaying which, ſhe flew to execute her commiſſion.

This caſket, formed of agate, mounted in gold, was ſoon placed before Lady Auberry; ſhe was drawing the key from one corner of her purſe, where it lay ſnugly wrapped up in ſilver paper; whilſt every eye was employed in examining, every tongue in admiring the beautiful toy, in which had been placed the important vouchers.—"Here (ſaid ſhe, preſenting "the key to them), is ſomething as well "worth your obſervation, as the caſket "itſelf;

" itſelf; the whole was a preſent from my " ſon Montague, for the very uſe to which " it is dedicated; and this key has never " once been in the lock ſince I made the " laſt valuable depoſit; try how the wards " will turn, Mr. Sandford; I feel myſelf " a *fool*, and the operation is *too* much " for me."

He did as ſhe deſired—it turned with perfect eaſe—the lid opened with a ſpring —it ſuddenly flew back, and, *horrible* to relate, it was as barren of contents, as when it firſt came out of the artificer's hands who made it!

Conſternation took poſſeſſion of the aſtoniſhed circle, and ſhewed itſelf in a ſad variety of ſilent woe; the fortitude of Lady Auberry forſook her for a moment; her head ſunk back on the chair—her eyes cloſed, and her hands fell lifeleſs by her ſides; the eyes and hands of Mr. Sandford were lifted up to heaven—Miſs Beauley threw herſelf at the knees of the venerable victim of a ſet of wretches, whoſe villany

was

was now but too fully explained—the honeſt lawyer ſtood with his mouth half open, his eyes fixed and ſtretched to their utmoſt extenſion, his hat had dropped from one hand, his cane from the other, and both were extended in an attitude of amazement.

" What is to be done? (ſaid Lady " Auberry, forcing herſelf to rouze from " the effects of a blow, that had nearly " felled her to the duſt); *muſt* the fame of " my *fainted* daughter be tarniſhed! *muſt* " the birth of my angel Mary be ſtigma- " tized with diſgrace! What is to be done, " my friends, to ſave us from *theſe* cala- " mities?"

" Yes, there is a poſſibility (cried " Harvey); perhaps, Madam, you may " have moved theſe papers from the place " where you firſt put them."

" Never, never; I have never ſeen " them: I have not opened the caſket, " ſince the day my darling received bap- " tiſm from the hands of the Biſhop of S——.

"S——. Oh! why, why did that cruel "Biſhop ever prevail on me to authoriſe "the marriage."

"Is his Lordſhip yet in exiſtence? (aſked "the lawyer)."

"O no; no, he has been dead theſe "twelve years."

"Are any of the witneſſes living?"

"There were but two, and they are "gone to record it in heaven."

"Rot it, that is curſed unlucky (cried "the provoked lawyer, forgetting that he "was ſpeaking to a Dowager Counteſs)."

Mr. Sandford walked about the room, agitated beyond deſcription; Miſs Beauley ſat on the carpet by the ſide of Lady Auberry, holding one of her hands, and wetting it with her tears.

"I have a thought (ſaid Sandford); I will "go this moment to *end*, or *aſcertain* my "ſuſpicion;" in five minutes more he was mounted, and gallopping down the avenue.

When

When the ſpirits are depreſſed, when hope is extinguiſhed, and the tortured ſoul wrapped in the dark mantle of deſpair, the ſmalleſt ray of light, where no light is expected, acts with reſplendent glory, and illuminates the dreary proſpect; ſuch an effect did the ſudden departure of the good chaplain produce on the minds of the melancholy circle he left behind him.

"He is gone (ſaid the venerable Grand-
"mother, with returning vivacity of coun-
"tenance and voice); he is the ſervant of
"God; he is gone on an errand of mercy,
"and the God of mercy will lead him to
"detect this combination of villany."

"I wiſh we had *one* living witneſs (re-
"plied the man of law); how happened it
"your Ladyſhip was not preſent at the
"nuptials of your daughter?"

"It was ſhe, it was herſelf that prevent-
"ed me—the angel wiſhed to ſcreen me
"from the vengeance of her father, if her
"union with poor Montague ſhould be
"diſcovered."

He

He ſhook his head. "It was a moſt un-
"lucky precaution," was all his reply.

"Then you have *no* hopes, Mr. Har-
"vey; I *ſee* you have no hopes, and my
"Mary *muſt* be a beggar?"

"God forbid (whiſpered the gentle, af-
"fectionate, ſympathizing Niece of Lady
"Jane Petworth)! have I not *ten* thouſand
"pounds of my *own*, and ſhall I not di-
"vide it with the dear injured Miſs Mon-
"tague?"

Theſe kind words were uttered ſo ſoftly, that they eſcaped the notice of Lady Auberry, but met the ears of Harvey, who acknowledged that he had received by them a look of infinite approbation.

"Yes (continued the agitated parent),
"it *muſt* be ſo; I ſee all the conſequences
"of this complicated plan of wickedneſs—
"*that* ſentence which diſinherits her from
"the eſtates of Montague, cuts off all her
"claims to *thoſe* of Auberry—and *who* are
"*they* that ſeek thy deſtruction, Mary?—
"Who are *they* that turn robbers to undo

" thee?—Who covers thy head with diſ-
" grace?—Who would ſtrew the poiſon of
" infamy over the aſhes of thy dead mo-
" ther?—Are they not thy *neareſt* rela-
" tions? are they not *thoſe* who ſhould
" have guarded thy *orphan* ſweetneſs?"

Feeble was the voice which pronounced this apoſtrophe; but ſo pathetic the look by which it was accompanied, that it pierced to the very ſoul of Harvey, and he ruſhed out of the room.

Miſs Beauley, diſſolved in tears, darted from her humble ſituation on the ground, and threw her arms about Lady Auberry, whoſe head fell on her boſom.

" Theſe emotions, my child (ſaid the
" gracious ſufferer, ſtriving to comfort her
" young friend), are a ſort of cannibals,
" that will feed on our own vitals, if we
" do not contend againſt them; let us then
" (erecting her perſon, and lifting up her
" pale face, majeſtic even in anguiſh),
" let us conquer theſe enemies, that will
" otherwiſe conquer *us*, and leave us nei-
" ther

" ther ſenſe nor reflection to baffle our " misfortunes, or fortitude to ſupport " them."

" Can you recall, Madam (aſked the " lawyer, who that moment returned with " only one drop of commiſeration rolling " down his rough cheek, which he had for- " gotten to wipe away)—can you call to " your remembrance, my Lady, the names " of thoſe ſervants who have been em- " ployed in any ſtation whatever, that re- " quired their attendance in your own " chamber, ſince the period of your " daughter's marriage to the preſent time? " Some of them *muſt* have been bribed to " *ſteal* theſe papers, and it may not yet be " *too* late to bring them to confeſſion."

She ſhook her head: " Alas (ſaid ſhe), " what a forlorn hope is that, to which " you would have me look up for redreſs! " In eighteen years, my good Sir, who " can ſay how many inferior ſervants have " had admittance to theſe apartments? Some " of them are dead, and all the reſt diſ-

" perſed over the face of the earth, God " knows where!"

" But, my Lady, the *deed* has been " done by ſomebody; and your *upper* ſer- " vants are, in *my* opinion, much more " likely to have been *tampered* with, than " your chamber-maids—your Ladyſhip's " woman, for inſtance."

" Of their fidelity I have no doubts, Mr. " Harvey—I am anſwerable for it, and " will try to convince you that it *cannot* " be any of *them* who have robbed me— " you remember poor Martain, ſhe died " but a few weeks ago."

" I do, Madam; ſhe was a *truly* good " woman; there can be no doubt of her, " I believe."

" As little is there of *Liſſey Liſter's* being " concerned in a *plot* of treachery againſt " her *benefactreſs*—Liſſey ſucceeded to the " place of Martain, when I made that " dear woman my friend and companion, " as the reward of her maternal attention " to my beloved Mary—Martain had

" adopted

" adopted this girl; ſhe was the daughter
" of her couſin, and to *her* ſhe bequeathed
" all the little fortune ſhe was enabled to
" ſave in my family—Is not this more than
" a *ſuppoſititious* teſtimony to the eſtabliſh-
" ment of her honeſty? But had I wanted
" a better ſecurity than Martain's partiality
" for her, I would put you in mind, that
" this young woman, after living with me
" ten years, married my houſe-ſteward,
" the boy Boden, whom I took from a
" charity-ſchool, and whoſe attachment to
" *me*, I am well perſuaded, will never end
" but with his life."

" Theſe are ſtrong preſumptive proofs,
" Madam; but *whenever* we find the thief,
" depend on it, my Lady, we ſhall meet
" with him *under a maſk*—and who did you
" take in her ſituation, when Boden's wife
" went home to live with her huſband?"

" The ſame who lives with me now."

" A *very* reſpectable woman (ſaid Har-
" vey). I did not know Mrs. Bailey had
" lived with your Ladyſhip ſo many years."

"Then you have no ſuſpicion of her "being an acceſſary to my wrongs?"

"No, I have not: but, Madam, are "theſe *all* the ſervants you have had "about your perſon, for the laſt eighteen "years?"

"All: and theſe, you cannot but allow, "are none of them objects for our ſuſpi- "cions to light on."

"That is true, my Lady; but when "every thing that ſhould be ſacred is at "ſtake, we muſt reſt nothing on ſuppoſi- "tion; and if they *are* innocent, they will "have no objection to atteſt their inno- "cence."

"What do you mean, Mr. Harvey?"

"Every ſervant *now* living, or who *has* "lived in your Ladyſhip's family, gentle "and ſimple, that are within *our* reach, "muſt be put to the oath."

Miſs Beauley, who was looking out at the window, her eyes fixed, but not diſtinguiſhing one object from another, even not ſo much as to ſee the kind-hearted chaplain,

chaplain, as he galloped up the avenue, till he was almoſt at the entrance, now cried out, clapping her hands, with an exclamation rather of expectation than joy, "Oh, thank God! thank God! here "is Mr. Sandford, and he is bringing "ſomebody behind him on the ſame "horſe."

"It is Samuel Eſtrige (ſaid Lady Au- "berry, with a diſappointed air). Where "can Mr. Sandford have picked up that "boy? What uſe can we make of him?"

Miſs Beauley told her what had paſſed at the cottage that morning, about the meſſage left by Dame Eſtrige, with her ſon Samuel, to be delivered to her Ladyſhip; but before ſhe had quite finiſhed her tale, Mr. Sandford came in, leaving Samuel outſide the door.

Having explained, that the motive of his abrupt departure was to fetch the lad—he ſaid, "they had met on the road, and "that he had taken him up on his own "horſe, not more for the ſake of expedi-

" tion, than to ſecure him from the enemy, " who might be ſtill lurking about the " neighbourhood, and ſilence his evi- " dence, if he had any thing of conſe- " quence to communicate, which I believe " may be the caſe (added the divine); " for on my ſtopping him, and aſking " whither he was bound, he ſaid he was " going to carry a meſſage from his poor " mother to my Lady, concerning of Miſs. " I bid him get up behind me; and theſe " are the only words that have paſſed be- " tween us—Have I your Ladyſhip's per- " miſſion to introduce him?"

" By all means (returned Lady Auberry) " —I *would* be ſanguine if I *could*, but I " have no hopes *indeed*; I have no hopes " from *that* quarter."

Samuel was a youth of three or four and twenty, of a wholeſome, comely, open countenance; by trade a joiner, and worked by the day under ſo ſevere a taſk-maſter, that the hours he had that morning dedicated to the laſt offices of filial piety,

were

were ſtolen from the very few allowed to him, for the refreſhment of ſleep, and ceſſation from bodily labour—At noon he had the diſpoſal of another hour, it was the hour of dinner, but the performance of his duty was a more grateful repaſt to Samuel; and he flew to the cottage of his mother—where finding he came *too* late to ſee her *living*, he thought the beſt way he could teſtify his love for her memory, was to execute her orders from the bed of death—he therefore made all the haſte he could towards Riverſdale, reſolving rather to forfeit his whole day's wages, than his obedience to the commands of the dead.

Samuel had no terrors when he was brought by Mr. Sandford into the preſence of Lady Auberry; he was often admitted to that honour, and had received many marks of her condeſcenſion, as well as of her bounty.

Having ſaid much to comfort him for the loſs of his mother, and permitted him to give a free vent to his natural, but rather

noiſy lamentations, ſhe deſired he would be compoſed, and tell her the meſſage Dame Eſtrige had left in charge with him, to deliver after her deceaſe.

" Mother did call it her *confuſion*, an' " pleaſe you, my Lady (ſaid the awkward " youth, daſhing off, with the back of his " hand, the big drops that rolled down his " florid cheeks); go Samuel, ſaid ſhe, and " make my *confuſion* to her Ladyſhip, or " I ſhall never die in no peace at all: " theſe were mother's laſt words: I am " certain ſure I ſhan't never forget them; " nor how piteous and pale the poor ſoul " looked when ſhe talked about her *con-* " *fuſion.*"

" He means *confeſſion* (cried Lady Au- " berry to Harvey, whoſe whole atten- " tion was fixed on the young man)—*ſurely* " we are not to hear that the *nurſe* of my " Grand-daughter has any ſhare in this " *treacherous combination.*"

" We muſt truſt to no *appearances*, Ma- " dam; *facts alone* are what we muſt en- " deavour

" deavour to come at—*ſubſtantiated facts*—
" we have no *other* reſource in *law* or in
" *equity*—Your Ladyſhip muſt get the lad
" to explain himſelf as well as he can,
" whilſt it ſhall be my buſineſs to *find out*
" his meaning, when I have got it on
" paper."—This paſſed between themſelves, Samuel heard nothing of the matter; but being ordered by Lady Auberry to proceed, and not to omit the ſmalleſt word that his mother had ſaid to him, in which her Ladyſhip or any part of her family were concerned, he yielded ready obedience.

Before he began, Mr. Harvey placed himſelf at a table, on which were pens, ink and paper; his back was to the narrator, that he might not be thrown into a fit of ſhyneſs, by obſerving that all he ſaid was immediately committed to writing by the lawyer; which had he known, might have added much perplexity to his mother's *confuſion*, by increaſing his own.

In ſomething leſs than half an hour he had completed his information, and was diſmiſſed with a gratuity, more proportionate to his *good* will than to any *actual* ſervice that could be derived from his communication, of which the following is an extract from the minutes of Mr. Harvey.

Samuel Eſtrige *ſayeth*, " that on the " 14th of February, 17— *three* gentle- " men and *one* lady came out of a coach, " and entered the cottage of Dame Eſtrige, " one of whom ſhe believed to be Mr. " Boden, whom ſhe knew very well ſome " years back, when he lived as ſteward at Ri- " verſdale; the other two ſhe had never ſeen " before, to the beſt of her remembrance— " *and* ſhe likewiſe *verily* thinks the lady " who came with them, was *Liſſey Liſter*, " my Lady's *late* woman, and *now* the " wife of ſaid Boden; but when ſhe chal- " lenged their recollection, they told her " they were ſtrangers, who had never been " in

" in *that* county before, but had heard " much talk of *her* cottage, as well as of " the *caſtle*, and the ſtrange ſtory about " the beautiful *pariſh girl* that was nurſed " by *her*, and afterwards adopted by the " Lady Auberry, who was willing that the " world ſhould ſuppoſe it was her *own* " Grand-daughter—and they further ſaid, " that it was to know the *rights* of all theſe " *reports* from herſelf, that they came to " pay her a viſit before they left ——— " ſhire."

Samuel further *ſayeth*, " that Dame " Eſtrige, inflamed to paſſion by the re- " proach thrown out againſt the *birth* of " Miſs Montague, whereby ſhe was called " a *pariſh girl*, and not the Grand- " daughter of Lady Auberry, quarrelled " with, and very much abuſed her *ſaid* " *viſitors*; that the woman, whoſe face was " covered with ſomething black, which " hung from her bonnet, brought her to " good temper again, by ſaying, *they muſt* " have been *impoſed* upon.—Being thereby

" pacified,

" pacified, ſhe told them the whole truth,
" from the *firſt* day ſhe received the child,
" under the name of Mary Wilſon, to the
" *laſt day* of her nurſing it, when ſhe gave
" her up to Lady Auberry, by the name
" of Miſs Mary Montague, her Ladyſhip's
" Grand-daughter—Samuel further *ſayeth*
" for his mother, that the woman with the
" black frill dangling from her hat, ſeemed
" much troubled, becauſe of the ſcandal
" that was every where about in the coun-
" try where ſhe came from, concerning
" Miſs Montague's being a *pariſh girl*;
" and aſked Dame Eſtrige if ſhe would ſign
" to the truth of what ſhe had *told* them,
" that when they returned back to their
" *own* town, they might be able to convince
" *every* body of what they were *now* them-
" ſelves *fully* convinced, that Miſs Mon-
" tague was *not* a pariſh girl, but the true
" Grand-daughter of the Lady Auberry:
" to which Dame Eſtrige, thinking it for
" the good of the young Lady, readily
" agreed—That the man whom ſhe did always

" believe

" believe to be *Boden*, aſked her to write
" down what ſhe had *told* them; but ſay-
" ing ſhe was no better ſcholar than to
" make her mark, the *ſame* man ſaid *he*
" would do it for her; and having wrote
" *two* ſides of a paper, which he took out
" of his pocket, as alſo a pen and ink from a
" black caſe, he afterwards did read to her
" all that he had put down, and actually
" in the true words ſhe had been telling
" them; with which ſhe ſaid ſhe was ſatis-
" fied, and they then ſhewed her where to
" make her mark; whilſt the two other
" gentlemen ſet their hands to it as wit-
" neſſes, ſaying, *they* would take care, and
" ſoon turn the tables on thoſe who went
" about telling a parcel of lies, that none
" but fools would believe; they could now
" contradict them all from good authority,
" from under the hand of the young lady's
" own nurſe; after which they were very
" civil, and would have given her money;
" but ſhe refuſed to take it, ſaying, ſhe had
" done no more than her *duty* to her dear
" young

" young lady, who was a perfect angel, in " ſpeaking up to her *good* name."

Samuel Eſtrige further *ſayeth* for his mother, " that ſhe did believe ſhe was be- " witched, and that after theſe people went " out of her cottage, by reaſon ſhe could " get no reſt night or day, and fell away, " and was ſo bad, that ſhe could not go to " Riverſdale, till my Lady ſent her coach " to fetch her; that when ſhe did go, " though fully purpoſed to tell my Lady " what ſhe had done, the ſpell came over " her worſe than ever, and tied up her " tongue, ſo that for her life ſhe could " not ſpeak a word about the matter, not " ſo much as to confeſs that ſhe had been " ſick."

Samuel Eſtrige further *ſayeth*, " that on " going to the cottage of his mother, this " preſent day, being the 27th of April, " 17—, he found her in a dying condition, " when ſhe related to him all the particu- " lars recited as above; that ſhe wept " ſorely—told him that ſhe had ſent for

" the

" the Reverend Mr. Sandford, and the " young lady who was ſtaying at Riverſ- " dale, that ſhe might make her con- " feſſion to them before ſhe departed; be- " cauſe ſhe had not enjoyed a moment's " peace ſince ſhe ſigned her mark to the " paper; for, though nothing was read to " her, but the truth of her own ſtory, word " by word, ſhe did verily think, that it " was *Boden* and his wife, late Liſſey " Leſter—who muſt have known every " thing about the matter as well as ſhe did, " and her being bewitched ever ſince, did " make her verily believe, all was not fair " and above-board—taking on piteouſly to " ſee his Reverence, and tell him the folly " ſhe had committed."

Samuel further *ſayeth*, " that when the " gentlefolks went away from the cottage, " Dame Eſtrige heard them ſay one to " another, as unobſerved ſhe followed them " to the coach—*This* will *do*, it will be *down* " with her *now*—from which moment ſhe " found an alteration in herſelf, and prayed

" Miſs

" Miſs Montague might not have ſuffered " by the ſame witchcraft, aſked God and " my Lady's pardon for her ignorance in " making her *mark*, as *they* could have had " no power to overlook *her*, if ſhe had " not firſt done as they bid her."

Such was the purport of Samuel's report, rendered into as intelligible language as his manner of relating it would admit.

Lady Auberry, inſtead of finding her hopes flattered by his communication, felt her deſpair increaſe at theſe new and myſterious appearances—for when diveſted of ſuperſtitious *conjectures*, ſhe ſaw in the nurſe's *four* viſitors, the artful agents of Sir Aſhton Montague; and in *their* management of the ſimple old woman, additional nets of cloſe-woven miſchief, ſpread for the deſtruction of her Grand-daughter.

" Is there any thing to be made out of " this boy's evidence?" ſaid ſhe to Harvey, as he ſat motionleſs, with his eyes fixed upon it, after it was finiſhed.

" Nothing

"Nothing in the world (he replied)—
"it is all *hearſay*—but go to your dinner,
"Madam, you have faſted too long al-
"ready; leave this helliſh buſineſs to me;
"nothing that *can* be done, ſhall be omit-
"ted—make no enquiries *what* ſteps I am
"*about* to take, but expect me to-morrow
"—*to-morrow* will decide for *us*, whether
"we ſhall *ſave* all, or *loſe* all." He roſe up, put the paper in his pocket, and hurried out of the room.

The remainder of the day was paſſed by Lady Auberry, and her anxious friends, in a ſtate of ſuſpenſe that may be better imagined than deſcribed. Miſs Beauley conſidered that there yet remained a *poſſibility*, that the papers might have been removed from the caſket, and prevailed on the depreſſed parent to truſt her with the keys of every cabinet, and every drawer in her poſſeſſion; all of which were rummaged and re-rummaged by the agitated enquirer, but without ſucceſs; ſhe felt the certainty of Lady Auberry's misfortune, and

and returned to her more diſpirited than before.

"I do not aſk you, my dear, if you "bring me *good* tidings (ſaid her Lady-"ſhip); I am but *too* well convinced your "ſearch *muſt* have been to no purpoſe."

The charming girl delivered back the keys with a mournful countenance, and ſpeechleſs acquieſcence.

"Neither (continued her Ladyſhip) "have I any *more* ſanguine expectations "from what Mr. Harvey's *efforts* and *to-"morrow* will produce; but God forbid "I ſhould have ſo far out-lived my reaſon, "as not to face an *honourable* danger with "fortitude. Mr. Sandford, will you ring the "bell, for our coffee? Dinner has been a "ſhort unſatisfactory repaſt; we all want "additional refreſhments to recruit our "ſpirits."

When mirth brings her jocund family together, how ſhort appear the dancing hours of feſtivity, and how loth are its children to ſeparate from each other! This

ſort

tleman; and *then* dub him the *friend* of Lady Auberry, in whoſe family it was impoſſible he could be of any more conſequence than the *houſe-ſteward, maître d'hotel,* or groom of the chambers—Had ſhe been *one* of *us,* ſhe would not have *miſrepreſented* our *eſtabliſhed* cuſtoms ſo egregiouſly, as to ſay, that we make *companions* of our *domeſtics*—a mighty natural *trait* indeed of high life—ſhe only expoſes her *own* ignorance, and *muſt* convince every body who reads her book, that ſhe was never admitted to any table, where this ſort of grace-ſaying *dependant* is retained, or ſhe would have known, that *they* always *come in* with the dinner, and *go out* with the deſſert—Then ſhe draws characters, and pictures of *us* on the ſame *pretended* foundation of knowledge—An ill-natured *purring* old *cat*—how ſhould ſhe know to deſcribe *women* of *quality,* when it is plain enough the creature has never been admitted into *our* circles?

" There

"There you miſtake, Madam; I lived "in the *very* heart of them *many* years— "but as one may have too much of a *good* "thing, I retire myſelf from *ſuch* ſociety, "with the humble hope of making my "leſſons *uſeful* to your grand-children, who "it is *likely* may ſtand in need of a *little* "more inſtruction than you have *time* or "*inclination* to beſtow on them.

"I muſt alſo ſet you right in point of "the blunder *you* think I have made, about "the chaplain—it is no blunder at all— "ignorance has not hurled me headlong "into error. Mr. Sandford did hold "*friendly* converſe with Lady Auberry— "I know what your eſtabliſhed cuſtoms "*are* well enough, and would feign tell "you what they *ought* to be: with this "view I have put the obſervation in your "mouth, merely to have the pleaſure of "making you the retort courteous.

"Whoever conſiders the prieſthood as "leſſening the *dignity* of man, or *degrading*

"to

" to the importance of his *ſtation* in life,
" *muſt* either believe all religion to be *im-*
" *poſture*; or, if they do *own* the being of
" a *God*, the character under which they
" figure him, is ſo *ſcandalous* and *unworthy*,
" that I think it would be a kindneſs to
" ſuppoſe *them* Atheiſts, who treat his *name*
" with irreverence, his *ſervice* with diſ-
" reſpect, and his *ſervants* with contempt!

" If you like my doctrine, it is well—
" if you follow it, ſtill better—but ſhould
" you turn from it, as not worthy your
" attention, I will modeſtly appeal from
" *numbers* to *reaſon*; where, if the cry is
" ſtill againſt me, I will *ſay* I have meant
" *well*, I have done well; I will think *ſo*,
" and *reward* myſelf—To creep after ap-
" plauſe, is a ſervile and a precarious gra-
" tification."

It is now time that I ſhould return, and knit together the thread of my ſtory.

When Mr. Harvey left Riverſdale, having firſt taken down all the intelligence he could get out of *ſimple Samuel*, he pro-

ceeded immediately to a friend of his, who acted as a juſtice of peace; from whom he intended to procure, with profound ſecrecy, two warrants, for taking into cuſtody Judas Boden, and Lætitia his wife, on ſuſpicion of their having ſtolen, and privately conveyed away certain papers belonging to the Right Honourable Dowager Counteſs of Auberry.

Now, though the characters of both theſe Bodens had hitherto been held in much reſpect within the walls of Riverſdale, outſide that ſanctuary they were treated with *leſs* ceremony, and *more* truth; many cunning, paltry actions, of which they ſtood juſtly *accuſed*, had reached the ears of Harvey, and together with Dame Eſtrige's dying words—that ſhe did *verily* believe them to be *two* of the *four* perſons who came in a carriage to her cottage, made him ſuppoſe, they came there with no good intent, as they evidently had denied their *own* identity.

Whatever

Whatever were their villanous plans of miſchief that had begun to ſhew themſelves againſt the honour, the peace, and the intereſt of Lady Auberry and her family, he could not but perceive they were at the bottom of them; and the haſte with which he had left her preſence, proceeded from his fears, that if ſhe diſcovered his intentions, they might meet with a dangerous check from her extreme candour of mind, and the partial favour in which ſhe held the objects of his ſuſpicion.

On leaving the breakfaſt room, he had a ſhort conference with Mrs. Baily, her Ladyſhip's woman; by whom he was informed, that a little time before the death of Mrs. Martain, the companion of Lady Auberry, Boden's wife was brought by her huſband to Riverſdale, where ſhe continued ſome days after the interment of her relation.—Very officious Mrs. Baily obſerved her to be on this occaſion, in attending on her late Lady—one night in particular ſhe ſat up by her, when her Ladyſhip was much indiſpoſed, owing to

the ſhock ſhe had ſuſtained in loſing her confidential ſervant—In the morning, when Mrs. Baily went into the room, her Lady was faſt aſleep; and ſhe was informed by Boden's wife, that her Ladyſhip had reſted ſo well, as not to have once awakened; at which account ſhe was rather ſurpriſed, as Lady Auberry was at no time a good ſleeper; but naturally enough accounted for the alteration, as well as for her not waking till eleven o'clock the ſame morning, by concluding the apothecary had mixed ſome ſort of opiate to quiet her nerves, and compoſe her ſpirits, in the draught ſhe uſually took at bed-time: but when ſhe aſked him the queſtion the next time he came to Riverſdale, he aſſured her nothing of the kind had been adminiſtered by him.

" Damn the ſorcereſs (cried the enraged " lawyer)! ſhe firſt laid her aſleep, and af- " terwards robbed her: curſe me, if I " don't make an example of them! But " ſay nothing, my good woman, to your " Lady,

"Lady, of what has paſſed between our-
"ſelves."

He had ordered out his horſe when he firſt came down; a groom now led it round to the ſteps. Harvey was an elderly, heavy man, but vaulted into his ſaddle with the alacrity of a youth, the lightneſs of a Mercury, and flew down the avenue with the ſpeed of a race-horſe.

Mr. Archer, the juſtice of peace, to whom his firſt application was made, lived but a mile from Boden's ſnug habitation, which was by far the beſt houſe in the pariſh—the *next* beſt belonged to the village attorney—the *third* to the curate—the *fourth* was dignified with the ſign of the *Bee-hive*; and the *fifth*, conſequently occupied by the juſtice:—the juſtice was an honeſt man—by birth a gentleman—by education a ſcholar—by good-luck, comfortable—by nature, a humouriſt—by diſappointments, a miſanthrope—and by inclination, a bachelor.

On a garden chair, that he had nailed together with his own hands, from roots of trees and odd-ſhaped ſticks, which came recommended to his taſte by unnatural excreſcences, was this complicated being repoſing at the door of the fifth beſt houſe in the pariſh; when Harvey diſmounted outſide the wicket, flung the bridle of his horſe round the poſt, and made his unexpected appearance before the juſtice.

His worſhip was no friend to ceremony—the lawyer had no time to beſtow on it;—they ſhook hands, ſat down ſide by ſide—when the latter told the former, in a few words, that he was come to fetch a ſummons for two of his neighbours, whom he ſhould ſoon bring before him, if he was lucky enough to find them at home, and could put his hand on an officer to lay hold of them.

"Is not one of them Boden?" aſked the juſtice.

"Yes (ſaid the lawyer), and the other

"is

" is his wife; but what made you miſtruſt
" my buſineſs was with them? have you
" heard that I ſuſpect them of being con-
" cerned in a robbery?"

" No; but I have long enough known,
" that he is up to every ſpecies of miſchief;
" rot the fellow, he is ſo inſolent, ſo over-
" bearing, and troubleſome, that a hun-
" dred times I have wiſhed him a ſheep-
" ſtealer, that I might ſend him out of the
" pariſh."

" My good friend (eagerly exclaimed
" Harvey), can you inform me if he has
" lately had any viſitors to him from Lon-
" don?"

" I have not the honour of his ac-
" quaintance (replied the other), though
" he has condeſcended to ſignify his *ſur-*
" *priſe*, that the *only* gentleman in the
" neighbourhood with whom *he* could aſ-
" ſociate, had not been to *viſit* him; and
" I ſent the blockhead word, that when
" I wanted to *hire* a ſervant, if he could
" bring a *good* character from his laſt

" place, I might poſſibly let him hear from " me—He is a damned raſcal, and fattens " on the money of the poor, who would " rot in a ditch, if I did not occaſionally " ſend him *my* orders to relieve their ne- " ceſſities."

" But, Sir, Mr. Archer (cried the law- " yer, impreſſively and impatiently), to the " queſtion, to the queſtion—though you " do not *viſit* him, you might have heard " if he has had any *fine* people at his " houſe, who came flouriſhing away in a " carriage."

" The devil a one have I heard of, " neighbour, either *here* or *there*; I do not " believe there has been a carriage of any " ſort this half year, that has ſtaid in our " village longer than to change horſes at " the Bee-hive, except *one*, which a few " weeks ago brought down ſome powder- " headed puppies, who gave themſelves " airs, as if they were come to purchaſe " Sir Timothy Tomkin's eſtates; but after " picking their teeth two days at the public-

" houſe,

" houſe, they departed, as I am told, with-
" out going over a foot of the land."

" Zounds, it will do, man (ſhouted the
" lawyer)! theſe muſt be the very brace of
" villains I was aſking you about."

He was eagerly aſked for an explanation—a confidential explanation followed, to the utter aſtoniſhment of the almoſt incredulous magiſtrate—He, ever whimſically diſpoſed, had not left the ſmoke of his own chimney ſince he came to ſettle in that country, except to attend divine ſervice, a duty he never omitted, and of courſe was not perſonally known at Riverſdale: yet was he infected with the partial influenza of kindneſs, which ſpread itſelf through all the regions round about that hoſpitable manſion; and whilſt the names of Auberry and Montague were familiarized to his ears, the encomiums with which they were followed, opened a paſſage to his approbation, ſo that his heart might be ſaid to have venerated thoſe his eyes never beheld.

Entering as warmly as the lawyer himſelf into the ſituation of the unhappy family, he propoſed ſending for the hoſt of the *Bee-hive*, to get what intelligence they could out of him, before they proceeded any farther in the dark affair; and in a few minutes the landlord made one of the party.

"Richard (ſaid the juſtice), I ſent for "you, to know how your ſtock of old "port holds out, and if you can let me "have two or three dozen of the *right* "ſort?"

"Lord ſave your Worſhip (replied "*Bonniface*), I have no more in the "world left, of what your Honour is ſo "*funny* to call the *right* ſort, but only two "bottles."

"Why, what the dickens haſt thou done "with the half pipe from which I got my "laſt ſupply? Poured it down thy own "funnel, I ſuppoſe; or it might have "laſted twelve months, for all the wine-"drinking company thou entaineſt."

"*Formerly*,

" *Formerly*, to be ſure, your Honour, " the Bee-hive was not what it is *now*— " then a dozen, inſtead of half a pipe, " would have done the job; but *now* times " are mending, every bee brings its " honey, and we ſhall weigh well, maſter, " at late ſeaſon."

" I am glad to hear it, with all my heart, " honeſt Richard; and ſhall like to know " how all this good fortune is come " about."

" Why, in the firſt place, your worſhip, " there is 'Squire Boden and Madam, they " be come to like my liquor ſo well, that " inſtead of ſending twenty miles off for " their wine and ſpirits, they haves them all " now from the *Bee-hive*; they drinks very " *briſk*, and pays well—Then, *your Honour* is " as good a cuſtomer as one would deſire of " a ſummer's day.—Mr. Paceabout, our " lawyer, and Parſon Paul, have a dozen " or ſo *now* and *then*, beſides chance " comers."

"*Chance comers!* you have not many "of them, I believe."

"The *worſe* my luck, 'Squire—I likes "*them* that drinks at my houſe, and orders "their biddy with their bottle, more bet- "ter a great deal than ſending my liquor "out—it was not paſſing a month ago, that "three ſpecial London chaps came down "here on a frolic; and though they ſtaid "no more than two days and a bit, their "bill com'd in that ſhort time, and as "honeſtly charged as any publican could "have charged it, without hurting his con- "ſcience, to fifteen guineas."

"Fifteen guineas! (repeated Harvey, "who, with a pretended air of ſurpriſe, "now for the firſt time broke through his "political ſilence)—then, I ſuppoſe, they "muſt be men of conſequence, with plenty "of attendants?"

"Bleſs your Honour, they had no more "attendants than the back of my hand, "except an old coach, in which they poſted "all the way from London."

"Then

"Then they lived well, and entertained "nobly, I warrant?" ſaid the juſtice.

"Like ſons of thunder, your Worſhip— "not that they were given to company-"keeping; nobody came near them, but "'Squire Boden and Madam, who ſhewed "them all over the country, and ſaid they "were come to buy Tomkin's farm: but, "however, I heard no more of that mat-"ter, as long as they ſtaid at the Bee-"hive; all I troubled myſelf about, was "to get the belly timber ready by the time "they came back; and if your Honour will "believe me, it coſt out of my own "pocket two guineas a day, in ſending to "market for all manner of rarities; and "as to my *beſt* port, as your Honour talks "ſo much about, they ſucked it away like "mother's milk."

"As they had no horſes (ſaid Harvey, "careleſsly), I ſuppoſe they always walked "when they went out with the 'Squire and "his Lady, to view the country?"

"All

"All but once; and then they ſaid I "muſt get them a couple of cattle; ſo I "borrowed Farmer Bell's grey mare, and "our coal-carrier's black gelding, becauſe, "as they went ſteadily in a cart, there was "no fear they would draw the coach well "enough.—He who ſeemed to be the head "gentleman turned coachman, and drove "the other two, the 'Squire and Madam, "who all rode inſide, to go about and ſee "proſpects."

"Can you recollect the day you bor-"rowed the horſes to accommodate this "jolly party?" aſked Harvey.

"Why, as ſure as I live, maſter, it was "the fourteenth of February; I remember "it, by reaſon that it fell out on my own "birth-day; and when I went the day "before to borrow the cattle, I aſked the "farmer and Black Jack to take a tiff of "punch with me gratis, to drink my "health; beſides paying them the price of "a whole day's work for the mare and "gelding."

Mr.

Mr. Archer enquired, if he could not tell the names of his late gueſts?

"Not cleverly (he replied) becauſe "why? they never ſaid before me, that "they was called by any names at all; "only once I did hear *he*, who ſeemed to "bear the biggeſt ſway, and to be head "over all, ſay to another of his comrades, "when he toſſed a boat of gravy over the "table-cloth—Rot you, Simmons, what "are you at now? I remember *that* was "his name, by the reaſon I know a very "*honeſt* tanner of the ſame—He who ſpilt "the gravy was a little tight man, well "put together, and looked as bold as a "captain, but ſaid nothing at all, only "begged pardon, rubbed his hands, co-"loured as red as fury, like my wife "when ſhe is in a paſſion; but it was all "for fear that he had given offence to his "betters."

Nothing further was to be got from the communicative hoſt of the Bee-hive, and the juſtice diſmiſſed him, with an order for

ſomething

ſomething in his own way, which recompenſed his trouble of attendance.

The two friends now conſulted together, what was the next beſt ſtep to be taken; it being perfectly underſtood, that theſe three men from London muſt have been the very ſet who, with Boden and his wife, paid a viſit to the cottage of Dame Eſtrige, on the fourteenth of February; and it was *as* plain, that, if the heir at law to the Montague eſtate was not of the party himſelf, theſe travelling *gentry* were no better than dependent ſcoundrels, employed by him to act in the lower departments of frauds and deceptions—It was alſo evident, that the Bodens were leagued with them in the ſame treacherous buſineſs;—the old nurſe in her laſt moments had declared, that the man whom ſhe believed to be Boden, did draw up a paper, to which his wife prevailed on her to ſet her mark, and that it had been witneſſed by the other two men who came with them out of the carriage.—This was a clear

a clear caſe; but what the *real* contents of this paper could be, was a queſtion they aſked each other, with as little chance of information, as if they had been enquiring the time of day from a deaf man, or their way through a labyrinth from a blind one: —at laſt it was agreed, that the lawyer ſhould firſt go to the houſe of Boden, whilſt his friend made out the ſummons, and procured a proper officer to ſerve them with it—and then to bring them before him for examination.

Away went Harvey on foot acroſs the fields, with a ſound oaken cudgel in his hand; a precaution any honeſt man may take, when he is going to bring himſelf into contact with a villain.—As he walked in a row of elms, he met with a girl carrying a milk pail on her head towards the houſe, which was now in view; he accoſted her, with a "Good evening to you, pretty "maid!" and aſked if ſhe lived with the 'Squire, the only appellation by which the

the 'Squire choſe to be known through the village.

"To be ſure I does (ſaid the ſimple "wench), when they be at home; but now "I don't live with them, becauſe they be "gone away."

"And where are they gone to?" cried the lawyer, in a tone of vexation.

"Somewhere, I ſuppoſes; but they did'nt "tell. They only ſaid, when they went "off this morning on horſeback, that I "need not ſet up for them, as they ſhould "not be at home all night; but cautioned "I to keep the windows ſhut, to go to "bed betimes, and not let no idle fellows "come lurking about; ſo I hope you will "now be ſo civil, as to go about your "buſineſs."

He was inclined to ſmile at her polite audience of leave; but the thoughts of Lady Auberry, and the agony of ſuſpenſe in which he had left her, reverted on his memory—he lifted up his heavy cudgel, and

and let it fall again to the ground, ſo forcibly, that the girl cried out, " Mayhap " you be a little beſide yourſelf—mayhap " your ſweetheart won't have you—Jack " Turnſtile drowned himſelf for love of " I, and the neighbours did all ſay, that " he was as mazed as a ſheep, or he never " would have gone to put an end to his life " in that manner of ways; but I hopes " you don't intend for to do no ſuch a " thing?"

Before he could make a reply to this tender-hearted ſuppoſition, or turn back from the houſe, at which he was nearly arrived, what objects ſhould ſtart upon his ſight, coming out of a lane on the right hand of the high road, but the identical people he came in queſt of!

His companion gave a ſhout of awkward aſtoniſhment at their unexpected return, and, without taking any further notice of him, ran into the houſe.

Harvey ſtood obſerving them, where he could not be ſeen by them—A ſervant in

livery

livery aſſiſted his miſtreſs to alight, then went towards the ſtables with the horſes—Boden walked into the garden, and his wife into the houſe, whither Harvey followed her—before the girl found time to ſet down her milking-pail, and ſhut the door after the 'Squire's lady had paſſed through it.

Her face was, as Dame Eſtrige had deſcribed it when ſhe came to the cottage, covered with a black veil, that hung from her hat, ſo that ſhe did not immediately ſee who it was that accoſted her with, "*Your ſervant, Madam*;" but his *voice* was recognized with leſs difficulty, and ſhe received him very courteouſly, yet appeared in great haſte to ſend for Mr. Boden; which he would not permit her to do, ſaying, he had an hour to ſpare, and *ſhe* could give him all the *entertainment* he wanted, till her huſband came in; but begged ſhe would take off her hat, or he ſhould think he was talking to her through a wall; and nothing was ſo great a treat to him,

him, as the meeting with an old acquaintance *face* to *face*.

"Indeed and I ſhall do no ſuch thing, "Mr. Harvey—I have a redneſs in my "face, and my eyes are ſo weak, that I "would not be ſeen for all the world "without my *curtain*.—I will hook it up "with a pin, if that will ſatisfy you."

She drew it up a *little*, yet not enough to give him more than a *peep* at her eyes—"This will never do, Madam, I am not to "be put off with ſo *ſmall* a portion of your "*engaging* countenance." And he raiſed it ſtill higher, though with ſome reſiſtance on her part, which had a greater tendency to *coquetry* than *diſpleaſure*; for there is *this* faculty in flattery, that it will make even impertinences *ſhine*, impoſſibilities *ſeem* credible, and turn poiſon into the *elixir* of life.

"I have been at Riverſdale to-day," fixing his eyes ſteadily and ſternly on her as he ſpoke.

"O laws! and how does the charming

"old

" old Lady ?—I hope you bring me good " accounts of her health."

He ſhook his head. " It might have " been better, Mrs. *Liſſey*—I beg your " pardon, Mrs. Boden, I mean :—I ſay, it " *might* have been better, if, in your *great* " attention to procure her ſleep when you " ſat up with her after the deceaſe of " your relation, you had not given her too " *heavy* a doſe of that confounded opiate."

The lawyer was a ſhrewd man: he knew when it was beſt to make a gradual deſcent, and when to advance by ſurpriſe—Had he told her, You *have* given laudanum to Lady Auberry, ſhe would inſtantly have *denied* the fact; but by inſinuating that ſhe had adminiſtered *too much* of it, ſhe was thrown completely off her guard. In her eagerneſs to exculpate herſelf from the charge, contending for the *quantity* of the medicine, ſhe fairly allowed of its *quality*, and cried out—" *Why*, I gave " her but twenty drops, as I hope to be " ſaved."

" That

"That was no great matter, to be ſure; "and yet the doctors do ſay, we owe all "our preſent *diſtreſs* to its operation."

"Why, ſhe is not dead, I hope?"

"Not abſolutely *dead*, but in a very *bad* "way."

"L—d G—d, how you terrify me, Mr. "Harvey! indeed now, and I thought you "was come to tell me it was all over with "my dear Lady."

"Faith, Mrs. Boden, if *your* nerves "are not better than my own, what I have "to communicate will afflict you ten times "more than the *death* of Lady Auberry."

"Law, Sir, I am ſo frightened, you muſt "let me go and call Mr. Boden, or I ſhall "faint."

"You do not ſtir from hence, Madam— "if you are for fainting, air is the only "remedy." And he almoſt forcibly removed the hat which ſtill concealed the change his diſcourſe made on her features, too much for the purpoſe.——"I "thought (ſaid he) you complained of "being

" being troubled with a red face, and I " find it as pale as chalk."

" It is all your fault," (replied ſhe), hanging down her head, as he held her trembling hands to prevent her running out of the room—" I took you for a civil " gentleman; but you are no better than a " Hottentot, to come into people's houſes " and terrify them out of their ſenſes; but " I have a huſband, who ſhall call you to " account for this impertinence."

" Suppoſe I *prove* to you, that I come " on the moſt *friendly* errand to ſave *you* " and that huſband, with whoſe reſentment " I am threatened, from public expoſure, " public infamy, and public execution!"

Her complexion no longer bore any reſemblance to chalk, but flamed with the fury of more internal convulſions than ever agitated the bowels of Mount Ætna before an eruption—ſhe raved at Harvey —ſhe ſcreamed for her valiant help-mate to come and turn him out of the houſe, but all in vain: her voice was ſmothered

in

in rage, and its extenſion confined by agony.

"Woman, (ſaid he) forcing her into a "chair, and ſtanding before her, I will "*yet* ſave you, if it be poſſible, *even* againſt "your inclinations. — You *acknowledge* "that you gave laudanum to Lady Au- "berry, but you have not told the *whole* "truth; the ſame means that diſcovered "to her family your having adminiſtered "the ſleeping potion, has alſo cleared up "the occaſion for which it was admi- "niſtered.—Do you *remember* the little "key that you drew from her Ladyſhip's "purſe, whilſt ſhe was under the influence "of *your* preſcription?—Do you *recollect* "another which you took from her pocket "at the ſame time?—Have you forgot "how your hand *trembled* as you opened "the cabinet—how you *ſtarted* as you "laid it on the caſket—how you *looked* "and *liſtened* whilſt you ſtole from thence "thoſe fatal papers, the loſs of which, has "deſtroyed the peace of your *benefactreſs*,

" and reduced her Grand-daughter to beg-
" gary. There was an *eye* that *overlooked*
" you as you committed the theft, and you
" have no way to eſcape, but by making
" reſtitution. Give me back the papers,
" or tell me where you have conveyed
" them, and he who ſaw you may probably
" remit your puniſhment."

" It is falſe, (cried ſhe), with more ve-
" hemence than caution—*he* did not ſee
" me—*nobody* ſaw me—nobody was up in
" the houſe, but myſelf."

Boden now ſtalked into the room—the voices of his wife and her viſitor, by this time at their full bent, had reached him before he got within the door—a guilty mind is ſoon panic ſtruck; ſomething was amiſs, but he could not tell what: think ye he was afraid to contend with any bully of his own inches? No; he would have tuſſeled with a bruiſer, or knocked an honeſt man on the head whoſe back was turned, with as much calmneſs as he would paſs by him.—On ſuch occaſions he was a hero—

hero—but to *face* a profeſſional adverſary, *one* equally practiſed in the ſcience of *honor* as in the laws of *equity*—one who he *knew* to be the neighbour, the friend, and the attorney of Lady Auberry, produced ſenſations contrary to heroiſm, and when he heard the voice of Harvey, he felt himſelf a *daſtard.*

He conſidered for a moment whether he ſhould quit the place or proceed to combat—his hypocriſy was as *conſummate,* as his deeds were *atrocious;* and when he played the *villain,* he would borrow from his diſguiſe the placid compoſure of eſtabliſhed *virtue;* the cloke was always at hand, and covering his confuſion with it over head and ears, he was approaching towards the lawyer to take him by the hand, and expreſs the pleaſure his preſence gave him—when his wife, breaking from her confinement, flew to him as if to take ſhelter under his protection, and proclaimed in accents of terror, that Harvey had ſcared her out of her ſenſes, by taxing

her with having poiſoned and robbed her dear old Lady.

"Here muſt be ſome miſtake, (ſaid he), "putting her gently aſide.—My good Sir, "I am glad to ſee you with all my heart— "I am ſure my wife has been alarmed "without your giving her juſt cauſe to "complain, and that your intentions are "friendly."

"The moſt ſo in the world, (he replied), "and I have been explaining them to "Mrs. Boden."

"Indeed, and ſo he has, my dear; do "you know, he ſays we ſhall both be "hanged, if we do not give back the pa- "pers."

She was ſuddenly interrupted, by Boden's commanding her ſilence—his impudence and ſtudied eaſe forſook him—his ſtub-born limbs ſhook under him—his eyes ſtarted from their orbits—the veins in his forehead filled with liquid crimſon—his broad mouth, which at all times reſembled that of a *John Dory*, became extended from

from ear to ear, and was garniſhed with a complicated grin of apprehenſion, cowardice, and malice. It was his ambition to enjoy the *profits* of vice, without encountering the *diſcipline* of ignominy—he trembled at the words of his ſpouſe, and ſaw that her extreme folly was bringing him on the brink of detection.

"Liſſey, (ſaid he), what *nonſenſe* are "you talking about; Mr. Harvey has "only been *jeſting* with you.—What mur- "der haſt thou committed, poor girl—and "what papers haſt *thou* ſtolen from Lady "Auberry?—*You* that have not ſeen her "Ladyſhip this ſix weeks—you *know* you "never gave her any thing to *take* when "you was at Riverſdale—and you *know* "we have no papers of *her's*, or any other "body's, but what belongs to our *own* "buſineſs."

"And ſo now I told him; but he ſaid I "was watched, and he had got a man to "ſwear, that I took the keys out of my

" Lady's pocket, and ſtole the certificate " of Lady Mary's marriage to Colonel " Montague, and the will and the certi- " ficate of Miſs Montague's chriſtening."

" Did *you* ſay *this*, Sir, he aſked in a " menacing attitude? If you *did* ſay it, you " are not the gentleman I took you for, " and deſire you to quit *my* houſe imme- " diately."

" I really did not give in a *liſt* of the " *papers* that are miſſing, ſaid Harvey, " calmly; and I am obliged to the *memory* " of *your* wife, for *calling* them *over*, as " well as for having *exactly* ſpecified the " number of *ſtupifying* drops ſhe admi- " niſtered to Lady Auberry, before ſhe " could get at her keys. I think, Madam, " if I remember right, you ſaid they were " no more than twenty?"

" What! (cried Boden), darting freſh " fire on his fiery-faced conſort—have you " been telling a parcel of damn'd *lies* that " may bring my neck to the halter?"

" Laws!

"Laws! ſure you don't believe I would "be ſuch a fool, my dear.—I'll take my "oath, I never ſaid the words."

"And will *you* take *your* oath, *Sir*, that "you did not go to the widow Eſtrige, at "her cottage near ———, on the four-"teenth of February, in company with "three other men and this lady of *veracity*, "and when *there*, under falſe pretences, "got her to ſet her *mark* to an inſtrument, "of no *good* meaning to the orphan daugh-"ter of the late Lady Mary Montague."

Both cried that they were ready to take their oaths.

"Come with me, then, (ſaid Harvey); "ſince you will ſend yourſelves to the "devil, the neareſt way is to the juſtice."

They eagerly ſeized what they thought would effectually clear them from all future ſuſpicions, and followed him acroſs the fields, to the reſidence of Mr. Archer: in their way they paſſed the conſtable of the pariſh, who was going to wait on them in his *official* character; but the lawyer

made him underſtand, by ſome ſilent geſture, that his interference was unneceſſary; and he purſued his way onwards, pulling off his hat as he went by, and wiſhed them a good night.

Harvey's intentions in conveying them without noiſe or expoſure before Mr. Archer, was, with the hope, that when their forces of rhetoric were united, they might be ſucceſsful in bringing them to confeſſion, the only means by which he foreſaw any ſtop could be put to the impending deſtruction that muſt otherwiſe, for want of proof, be eſtabliſhed, without *reference* or *appeal*.

Alas! inſtead of gaining the point, for which he laboured, they acquired in their ſhort walk ſo much more preſence of mind, than they had experienced under their own roof, that thoſe advantages he had gained by *ſurpriſe*, were loſt by *deliberation*. The whole charge was not only denied before the magiſtrate, but they even inſiſted on being put to the ſolemnity of

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an oath; for no other reaſon, but to clear themſelves to their honoured Lady, *who*, they were ſorry to find, had been worked upon by *evil-minded* people, to ſuſpect *them* of ſuch wicked and treacherous actions.

Threats—arguments—praying—preaching, were all in vain; daſhing through thick and thin, they would go to the devil their own way: the oath could not be refuſed—it was therefore adminiſtered, and they went back to their own habitation, waſhed as white as *perjury* could make them.

Oh! with what curſes were they followed by the friends of honour, of innocence, of Lady Auberry, and of Miſs Montague.

The Juſtice ſtruck his pipe againſt the table, and daſhed it in a thouſand pieces.

"It is all over (cried Harvey, in a tone "of lamentation), the powers of hell have "conquered."—He called for his horſe, turned aſide his head as he paſſed by the

gates of Riverſdale—went home to his own houſe—ſat down in his office—ſearched over all his books of law for precedent caſes—wept when he could find none that gave him hopes of keeping poſſeſſion, without one ſingle evidence to produce in favour of his clients—went to bed ſupperleſs—got no ſleep the whole night—roſe early—unrefreſhed, fatigued, miſerable—and when the hour came that he thought he ſhould be expected at Riverſdale, he bent his courſe towards it with as much *anguiſh* of ſoul, as he probably would have felt for himſelf, had he been going to his own execution.

Gentle Reader, I cannot afford to keep you any longer at Riverſdale, as I have juſt heard from my publiſher, that he is ready for the fifth volume, and the fifth volume is not ready for him; inſtead therefore of deſcribing the ſcene at large, that paſſed between Lady Auberry and her friends, on the complete deſtruction of whatever little hope might yet have lingered

gered in their anxious boſoms, I muſt contrive to ſhorten the deſcription, and content myſelf with aſſuring you, that, contrary to your expectations, her Ladyſhip bore the completion of her misfortune with true Chriſtian fortitude; her reſt was not diſturbed by agitation, or her dreams made horrible by the midnight *phantaſies* of a guilty conſcience. I would further aſk her oppreſſors, how *they* paſſed the night. I do not tell you, that her ſilver hairs were not moiſtened with the *dew-fall* of ſorrow, after ſhe laid down her venerable penſive head on the pillow of repoſe; but I can poſitively *aſſert*, that her *perfect* reliance on the goodneſs of an *inviſible*, over-ruling Power, reſtored her in the courſe of a few hours, to humble reſignation, calm reaſoning, pious compoſure, and energetic fortitude.

As the ſtrongeſt proof I am able to lay before you, how little exaggeration I have beſtowed on this, my real character of *Chriſtian heroiſm*, take ſome part of her

letter to Lady Jane Petworth, when made acquainted by Mr. Harvey, with the treachery of her late ſervants, who, to the guilt of having robbed her, had added the crime of perjury, the better to ſecure their hard-earned wages of iniquity.

Miſs Beauley, at the requeſt of Lady Auberry, had taken up the ſubject from the beginning, and brought it down to its lateſt date of that day; to which was added, in her own hand, what follows:

Here is a picture, my friend, that is terrible enough to petrify you with horror; I know it is well done, but the colouring, though it muſt be juſt, may be too ſtrong for my decayed ſight to dwell long on the ſubject; I therefore wiſely turn away, and invite you to do the ſame. We have now ſeen the very worſt that can poſſibly befall us; let us examine, and look abroad for better proſpects: I offer myſelf to you, as your guide, and will point out to *your* obſervation a thouſand pleaſant peeps, which you will otherwiſe overlook, or elſe fancy you

you cannot diſtinguiſh them through the foggy atmoſphere of preſent misfortunes; but which if you will only look the way I would direct you, ſhall appear as plain, and as bright to you, as they do to my own eyes.

I am not going to preach up any *unnatural* philoſophy; on the contrary, I allow that to be reduced from abundance to indigence is a *misfortune*.—There is *another*, infinitely more cruel, that muſt inevitably attend the firſt diſaſter; will not the ſame laws which humble the fortune of my Grand-daughter, cover the aſhes of my Daughter with infamy? This *laſt* ſtroke is hard to bear. Alas! it is very hard: and *yet*, is there *no* inference to be drawn from compariſon, to render the weight even of *this*, ſo fatal a conſequence, not *only* lighter, but *almoſt* to diminiſh it to a *mere* nothing? There certainly is, and I endeavour to find it in this one conſolatory reflection, that *actual* miſery can have no foundation but in *guilt*. Shall we fooliſh-

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ly complain that we ſuffer *wrongfully*; as if the puniſhment could be abated by the knowledge that we *deſerve* to be puniſhed; and is there no thanks due to the gracious arm of Providence, to whoſe protection we ſtand indebted for the preſervation of our internal peace?—Innocence may be villified; it may be trampled in the duſt—but its *nature* cannot change, its *peace* be deſtroyed, or its poſſeſſors unhappy.

I expect that you will hardly give me credit, though I am really dealing honeſtly with you—perhaps it may be more conſiſtent with the weakneſs of human nature, to weep and lament over our ſorrows, rather than coolly and deliberately to reaſon them away—yet for your *own* ſake, caſt as you are, in the very mould of ſympathy, accuſe me not of having acted the miſer by you—do not ſuppoſe I am concealing a hoard of griefs from your inſpection, of which I am loth to make you.

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the partaker. I have done no ſuch thing; the ſentiments I give you are the whole contents of my heart.

You are certainly, my dear friend, acquainted with what the poor tortured body ſeems to feel, when about to be ſeparated from the divine ſpark, by which it has been animated: and did this reflection never ſtrike you at the moment, that theſe tortures are permitted for the example of thoſe, who are only ſpectators in the chamber of death, whilſt the victim of his office feels an internal, inviſible ſupport, of which all around him are totally unconſcious? I cannot help comparing *my* ſituation to *his*; all who hear of my afflictions, will cry out, ſhe *muſt* ſink under them—but I have *pleaſant* thoughts, and pleaſant *pre-ſentiments*, that tell me I ſhall weather through them.

Not a word, if you pleaſe, to my darling Mary, or to her kind friends, the

Duke

Duke and Ducheſs of Cleveland: of this buſineſs I am willing to ſpare them as long as I can. When I am called upon to relinquiſh *or* defend her claims, I know I muſt ſubmit to the *one;* becauſe it is now for ever out of my power to eſtabliſh the *other*; and it will then be time enough to tell them, and the blameleſs child herſelf, that ſhe has nothing to depend on but her *own* rectitude, and the poor efforts of her aged Grand-mother: the Duke is not yet, I underſtand, ſufficiently recovered, for me to think, without more cruelty of heart, than, I thank God, belongs to me, of drawing off her perſonal attention from him; but whenever the curtain is withdrawn, which now conceals from her the truth of her ſituation, then I muſt recall her—in happineſs I could do without her —in unhappineſs we ſhall not be able to do without each other:—perhaps, when the time comes for diſcloſing all, you will have

have the goodneſs to conduct her to me—I aſk a great deal, but not more than your liberal ſoul is capable of granting.

Here the ſcene cloſes at Riverſdale, and opens in Arlington-ſtreet.

On the third day after the ſudden flight of Mr. Lexington, we find his Uncle, Lord Francis Lexington, at the lodgings of Mr. Melliſh, taking leave of that gentleman; whilſt his travelling equipage waited at the door to convey him to Dover, and from thence to Paris, where his nephew had promiſed to wait his arrival.

What is happineſs? has been a queſtion of as long ſtanding as the world itſelf, and perhaps as difficult to be defined as if one was to aſk what was chaos before the creation of the world: but though Solomon himſelf could not diſcover it in all his reſearches, it was at laſt found out by a man, rather leſs wiſe than the royal prophet; and Lord Francis Lexington,

ington, from the moment that his nephew's union with Miſs Montague was finally deranged, would have told him in his teeth, he was a viſionary for *miſnaming* ſubſtantial good to be no better than vanity and *vexation* of ſpirit.

Nothing leſs than the ſudden indiſpoſition of the Duke would have detained him twelve hours in town, after his *predeſtined* ſon-in-law had taken himſelf out of it:—this was a bar, that as long as his brother continued in a ſtate of real danger, decency did not permit him to overleap; but the inſtant his Grace's ſymptoms were declared to have taken a favourable turn, his expedition commenced, being always prepared to ſeize on the firſt occaſion that offered to enter on the double purſuit of his daughter, and a huſband for his daughter—one who ſeemed to be ſnatched by the fates from the arms of another, merely to oblige his Lordſhip.

It

It would have added a good deal to the benefit of his plan, in *one* reſpect, if he could have made *Melliſh* the companion of his excurſions; becauſe, though he ſhould have the felicity of meeting with his daughter, how was he to know it was her, having never ſeen her ſince ſhe was in a ſtate of actual infancy; a circumſtance that at firſt created a little difficulty, till the Conſul, who was nailed down by ſtate matters, and could not get away without the Miniſter's inſtructions, partly removed this dilemma from the mind of his noble patron, by giving him in writing ſuch a deſcription of the beautiful Roſina, as made it appear a more eaſy taſk than he at firſt imagined, to diſtinguiſh her from the reſt of her ſex:—one perſonal mark promiſed more than all, to be a leading clue to his ſucceſs; it was a large mole on the right ſide of her neck, and level with the tip of her ear; which, if his Lordſhip had ever remarked, it had entirely

entirely ſlipped his memory. Greatly rejoiced at the acquiſition, he called it the leading ſtar, by which he ſhould direct his enquiries.

The reaſon of his ſtopping at the Conſul's door the morning he ſat out on his expedition, was for Melliſh once again to examine over the catalogue of perfections attributed to Roſina, which neither admitting of eraſures or inſertions. He ſat off in the higheſt ſpirits imaginable, not doubting that as Miſs Montague was down, never to riſe again.

His plan was this: to viſit all the convents in France as well as in Italy, and to ſearch every court in Europe, till he had found his *loſt* treaſure—if ſhe was engaged in a *tranſient* connexion, and ſometimes he ſuppoſed it to be her real ſituation, *that* would put no ſtop to his *paternal* intentions, which had only ambition for their ſhallow foundation. With theſe pious reſolutions, he took his departure

parture from Arlington-ſtreet at eleven o'clock; and leaving him to purſue his journey, I returned to thoſe letters which are to connect the remainder of my little unaffected hiſtory.

LETTER

LETTER XLII.

Sir Aſhton Montague to Lord Auberry.

Bath, April 14, 17—

I AM ſorry to hear you have parted with your pretty little Marchioneſs. You was a deviliſh—I do not ſay what, to give her up to another, merely becauſe that other was her huſband, and becauſe ſhe choſe to go back to him, rather than continue with a lover, who is not only loſt to her, but to himſelf, and to every thing that is daſhing, figurative and ſublime, in the hemiſphere of gallantry.

What are theſe droniſh accounts that I daily hear of you, my Lord; I thought your

your good ſenſe had, by this time, wafted you far above the errors of prejudice: did you not ſwear, when I was laſt in town, that the moment our grand ſcheme was executed, you ſhould be yourſelf again? It is executed; you know it;—and with what neatneſs it is put out of hand, you alſo know—yet all the letters I receive are filled with your reproaches; *one* tells me, you wear ſhoe ſtraps, when all the reſt of the world are in buckles: *another*, that you go about without powder in your hair: a *third*, that you do not waſh your face; and *all* agree, that you are nothing in the world but a downright ſloven.

I am trying, Auberry, to put thee in a paſſion; all ſorts of ſtimulatives are good in thy ſluggiſh diſeaſe of ſtubborn negligence. Now, if thou haſt a mind for a tilting bout with any body *but* myſelf, who have been uſing thy name with more of fond pity than perfect reſpect, tell me ſo, and I ſhall ſend thee a liſt of all my fair

fair correſpondents; for it is only the lovely women that trouble their heads about your reformation; any, or all of whom, will, I take upon me to ſay, accept with courage a challenge from your Lordſhip, and be always ready to give you *honorable* ſatisfaction.

Do you ſuſpect, my Lord, what is rumoured as the cauſe that I am nailed down to this place of eaſe and idleneſs; they tell me I am attached to your lively ſiſter: it may be ſo—and if I have *your* conſent to try my luck, I ſhall, without doubt, ſet about it at my firſt moment of leiſure; at preſent, I muſt leave my *tender* intereſt to be ſettled by *others*, for neither *Miſs Pledell*, or *I*, have any time to beſtow upon it ourſelves; as yet, we have only ſet the wheels of our machine on the go, and it ſtill calls for our beſt exertions to keep them in motion; when the work is *completed*, I ſhall think of nothing but *how* to obtain *that* woman as my wife, whoſe talents are equal to the govern-

ment

ment of empires; and that man for my brother, who I have already the honour to call my friend.

Poſſeſſion's the word—we ſhall ſoon come to a diviſion:—*I* the lands—*you* the lady;—you are too generous a fellow to grumble about a few dirty acres, which is *all* that can fall to my ſhare; and the ſmiles of your charming ſiſter ſhall be my ſecurity—that I do not envy you, my fair and paſtoral couſin—it will be all amongſt us, one way or the other, in the long run.

Caſt off your gloomy habit of vapours, dear Auberry, and rub the ruſt from thy manly metal, which is of an excellent nature, though cruſted over by caprice: there is ſo much folly, ill-humour, and monſter in the compoſition of a hypochondriac, that I ſhould be aſhamed and afraid of the curſed ideas it engenders.

Why is it, my Lord, that you give Mrs. Oxburn ſo fair a field to torment me with compliments of your *neglect*; you

know ſhe is our faſt friend on a *certain* occaſion: beſides which, of all the lovely ſex, ſhe alone I ſelected as the beſt fitted for the *chère amie* of a diſappointed man. If you *will* daſh away the bleſſing I preſented to you, do it with *caution*: ſhe muſt not be *mortified*—we are too much in her power for *that*—flatter her beauty, and you will be her friend. A few ſmall condeſcenſions will coſt you no pains—ſhe is deviliſh handſome—you may tell her ſo, without fearing to crack your conſcience, as a horſe does his wind, by running againſt the hill.—Farewell; I ſhall not ſee you for three or four weeks to come, becauſe I find I can carry on our buſineſs better in private than public; I expect that the winding up will be ſoon, and without trouble from *thoſe* who are to account with us.

We have the honour of your name in the firm; but, after all, you are only a ſleeping partner; take care then that you do not diſcloſe the ſecrets of our trade in your

your dreams; and for the active part I am anſwerable.

Remember me to the enchanting Oxburn—tell her that *I ſay* ſhe has charms enough for a Venus de Medicis, and wit enough for the editor of a Britiſh newſpaper; however, if you are inclined to give her ſomething civil, in the ſame way, on *your own account*, it would be better received, and more to the purpoſe: have you heard of your own private affairs? Let me know how they go on, and once more farewell!

ASHTON MONTAGUE.

LETTER XLIII.

Lady Jane Petworth to Lady Auberry.

April 23, 17—

WHAT ſhall I ſay to you, dear——I had almoſt called you *celeſtial* Lady Auberry. In favour of human nature I retract the expreſſion—you are *not* celeſtial; you are only animated by a greater portion of the Divine Spirit than other periſhable beings.—The ſtream riſes higher than the fountain, and the rebound is ſtronger than the firſt motion; ſo my paſſions are leſs ſubject to the controul of reaſon than your own; and the blow, which you meet with calmneſs, rebounds on me with the force of an electrical ſhock that confounds my

my ſenſes, and has nearly annihilated my exiſtence.

What an unravelling is this to the myſterious conduct of Lord Auberry!—*Sir Aſhton Montague* is guilty—the *other* cannot be innocent. The diviſion of the *martyr'd* Mary's fortune comes between them—Can there remain a doubt, that the villains are leagued together in her deſtruction? I am not, like you, a philoſopher by ſyſtem; I have all the weakneſs about me of fooliſh precipitancies—I ruſh into torrents of rage, and ſail down the ocean of perplexities, without rudder or ballaſt.

I would reflect on this horrid robbery with deliberation, if I could deliberate: but I have made the effort, and relinquiſhed it, becauſe, inſtead of bringing me comfort, reflection only ſhews me that Lexington's ſudden and hitherto-unaccountable flight from happineſs and his country, had its root in the deteſtable vice of *avarice*.—Yet, depend on it, Madam, he

was warned of the impending miſchief, and fled from its conſequences.—I have fully eſtabliſhed the fact in my own mind, and he has forfeited my affection for ever.—Had I been his mother, I would have renounced him for an action ſo baſe, ſo unworthy. Was he not in purſuit of an angel?—devils ſtepped between them, *and* he deſerted her.

I got my packet from Riverſdale yeſterday:—thank God, I did not receive it in the preſence of your Grand-daughter. I felt a little alarmed, that it was not as uſual directed, under cover, to the Duke.—The firſt lines on which my eyes were eagerly caſt was, your Ladyſhip's *Chriſtian appendage* to the very long and explanatory letter of my niece Beauly.—I will not tell you how exceedingly ill I behaved on the occaſion; I ſhould incur your cenſure, if I did—you would call me an infant, and tell me I deſerve chaſtiſement.

I was to have breakfaſted in Groſvenor-ſquare, where, ſince the Duke's indiſ-

poſition,

poſition, I am always expected at eleven; however, ſo turbulent were my emotions after I had gone through the whole of my diſpatches, that I did not bring my ſpirits into any ſort of decent order to appear before the dear, intereſting ſubject of my recent ſorrow, till towards the hour of dinner.

The Ducheſs was in her dreſſing-room when I came; therefore I went directly to the Duke's chamber—found him alone, and ſitting in his arm-chair by the fire-ſide. He is certainly a great deal better—I think he will weather this fit—but he ſtill looks pallid, infirm, and ſpiritleſs. The thoughts of Lexington's unworthy relinquiſhment of his engagement to the beloved of all our hearts, it is plain to ſee, clings about his mind, and retards his recovery. We had a long converſation on the ſubject—the nature of which convinces me, you are in the right to keep the ſecret from him as long as we can; for, by her *tender* offices, and the *filial* concern which

is mingled with her unremitting attentions, ſhe is become ſo exceedingly endeared to his affections, that I am ſure, in his *preſent* ſtate, a knowledge of the moſt diſtant evil that threatened to aſſail *her*, would be fatal to himſelf.—He is like a feather in the air, which the lighteſt blaſt of adverſity would waft from our ſight in a moment: when it does come, I hope he will have acquired more bodily ſtrength to ſupport the conflict.

You muſt not ſuppoſe that I ſat an hour with his Grace, and forgot in all that time to make enquiries after your Grand-daughter.—I was guilty of no ſuch omiſſion. I aſked for her—I remembered to name her almoſt as ſoon as I entered the ſick room, where I expected to have found her. But I will tell you the truth—the effort was attended with a pang, which it coſt me ſome pains to ſmother—her name, her idea, every thing that reminds me of her perfections and the villanous ſcheme agitating againſt her, ſhakes my whole

whole nervous ſyſtem, and makes my feelings almoſt ungovernable. Fear not my want of caution—nothing ſhall throw me off my guard; I will obey your commands with exactneſs, though abſolute ſuffocation ſhould enſue.—The melancholy ſilence *muſt* be broken—Alas when!—too ſoon I know; but come when it will, the dreadful circumſtances are in my hands—and if you appoint me your agent to diſcloſe them, though I cannot wound, and at the ſame moment heal, as you do—though I cannot copy the dignity or the wiſdom of Lady Auberry; yet, in adminiſtering all the ſoothing balms that ſympathy poſſeſſes, I would not permit myſelf to be ſurpaſſed, *even* by Lady Auberry.

I never ſaw your amiable Mary look more beautiful than ſhe has done for the laſt three days.—One would ſuppoſe the roſes on her cheeks were forbidden to blow, when thoſe ſhe loves are afflicted or indiſpoſed: for till ſhe had reconciled Lexington to the Duke's favour, at leaſt,

ſo far as to prevent him from making a will in his diſfavour, and till ſhe had heard his Grace pronounced out of danger from his late attack, the lily alone preſided on her lovely countenance, and whitened in the languor of oppreſſion.—That oppreſſion is removed; there is nothing of ſadneſs that remains, except when ſhe is paying the tribute of a tear to the memory of her old nurſe, or in ſpeaking comfort to poor Jenny, who, under the patronage of ſo ſweet a miſtreſs, feels the loſs of her parent with leſs ſeverity, than ſhe would probably have felt it in any other ſituation.

And this ſweet Mary, who makes the ſufferings of her fellow-creatures ſo much her own, as not to be capable of enjoying any ſort of ſelfiſh *independent* happineſs; this epitome of the divine eſſence, who willingly extends her benevolent influence far and wide as the powers of limited human pity are allowed to exert themſelves. Is *this* to be the *ſtricken* dear? Is *this* to be the victim marked out for perſecution?

There

There muſt be ſome great deſign in the womb of fate—God will not permit the treachery to proceed, or he will take ſingular vengeance on the infamous perpetrators.

Dear and reverend Lady Auberry, every thing that I can ſay to *you* on this ſubject is abſolutely preſumption.—Fools cannot deal out conſolation to thoſe who are wiſer than themſelves—and in that predicament I ſtand, when I ſubmit to a compariſon that muſt leave a multitude of other women, as well as myſelf, very far behind you in moderation, in piety, and in knowledge.

I tell you my own weakneſs, without reſerve—and expect, from your *example*, to be not only ſtrengthened, but comforted. *You* have a mode of extracting happineſs, to which the chymiſtry of a bee is nothing: You ſuck the ſweets, without impoveriſhing the flower, whilſt *I* am making my voyage of life to little profit, and burning out my lamp in ſmoke and vapour.

The Duke and Ducheſs ſtill talk of making your Ladyſhip a viſit before the ſummer is far advanced—in the courſe of a month, he ſays, he hopes to begin the journey. What events may not happen in the ſpace of a month? Be they good or evil, you will teach me how to ſupport them. To you I looked up at an early period; to you, in my decline, I ſtill direct my ſenſes for inſtruction.

I am almoſt inclined to diſpute *even* with you for an equal ſhare in whatever concerns the welfare, happineſs, or intereſt of our darling Mary. Let us be related by an act of courteſy, and ſettle the matter at once. Your Ladyſhip is, in *reality*, her Grand-mother—give me the honour of being her mother by *adoption*. If you have the goodneſs to approve this arrangement, I ſhall thank you for beſtowing on me a conſequence, for which, (however unworthy of ſo dear a diſtinction) I ſhall never ceaſe to acknowledge myſelf your moſt grateful petitioner,

J. PETWORTH.

LETTER XLIV.

To Miſs Beauly.

April 26.—

I AM about, my dear Niece, to enter with you into a ſecret, though not a treacherous correſpondence. I have juſt finiſhed a letter to Lady Auberry; in which, I have left unſaid ſomething that I would not have her made acquainted with; hereafter I may have other communications to make you, the knowledge of which it might be better to conceal from her, whoſe ſorrows are already out of all proportion to a heart ſo tender, a frame ſo delicate, and age ſo advanced.

All that you tell me of her heroiſm—all the proofs ſhe has given me from her own hand of more than nominal reſignation, even of active fortitude, does ſcarce allow

me

me to ſuppoſe, that it is poſſible ſhe ſhould be very long able to ſupport the burthen of her trials—I rather fear ſhe will ſink under them.

I give you this painful neceſſary precaution, that we might hold ourſelves in readineſs to ſnatch from her cold boſom, and plant it in our own, that ſweet and tender bloſſom, which, when the venerable trunk that now ſuſtains it falls to the earth, will be left unſheltered, unprotected, perhaps ſcorned, inſulted, and trodden under foot.

Influenced by theſe ſentiments, my Anna, I have this day given inſtructions for a codicil to my will; by which, I bequeath to you a ſiſter, and divide my fortune accordingly.—I have no fear of your reproaches; on the contrary, I add to your portion of happineſs *more* than I have taken from the ſcale of your property."

The ſecret repoſed with you muſt go no farther—there is ſomething in my intention which I am conſcious would wound

the

the delicacy of Lady Auberry; and however well we intend, nobody has a right to make another lie under the weight of an imaginary favour; for as long as an act of kindneſs is only projected, and not executed, the obligation muſt be merely ſpeculative.

O Anna! Anna! how has my heart been torn—what tears of bitterneſs have I let fall ſince the receipt of your laſt letter! Long have I loved Lady Auberry—long conſidered her as a being ſuperior to the reſt of human kind—Was the cloud of misfortune that is gathering over her head to burſt on my own, I think I could bear it better than to ſtand in a ſheltered corner and ſee the few remaining ſands that are yet to run of her life deluged in affliction.

I know the ſtorm *muſt* come—I look for it every hour, and fancy I can trace a fore-boding coldneſs in the few faces I have ſeen ſince yeſterday. I have often thought it impoſſible, that any being, human

man, inhuman, or even ſavage, could be the enemy of Miſs Montague, but I am deceived.

Since the Duke's illneſs, the newſpapers have been thrown about upon the table, nobody read or opened them. I took three or four home with me this evening—in one of theſe convenient channels for anonymous aſſaſſination, and amongſt the other articles of faſhionable intelligence. to my inexpreſſible ſurpriſe, appeared the following paragraph in capital letters :

A ridiculous circumſtance took place yeſterday in a family of high diſtinction, not a hundred miles from Groſvenor-ſquare.—The fact was this : A young lady, the Grand-daughter of a reſpectable Dowager Counteſs, being on a viſit to a certain noble Duke, had captivated the heart of Mr. ——, a moſt accompliſhed gentleman, and heir apparent to his Grace. She had ſpread her nets with much caution, but took them up with leſs circumſpection.—The lady coquetted—the lover demurred—Yeſterday the parties had a meeting—when in the preſence

preſence of all his noble friends, he renounced the honour of her alliance, bade her an everlaſting adieu, and ſat off immediately for the Continent.

Some *fair* deſigner, my dear Niece, works at the bottom of this inſidious buſineſs.—I wonder if it is Miſs Lexington, Maria, or Mrs. Oxburn—one of them it *muſt* be; the inſertion is altogether *feminine*, and no other perſons were preſent at the extraordinary interview who could ſo early have ſent it to the editor, for it comes out on the very morning after the affair happened.

Already I ſee the darts of *envy* and *malice*, ſharpening under the touchſtone of miſchief.—Mary is accuſed of being a coquette—what will they accuſe her of next, I want to know? It is almoſt a pity that ſhe ſhould be young, beautiful, diſcreet, innocent, artleſs, unſuſpecting;—will her youth, her beauty, her diſcretion, make friends of her own ſex? I ſay they will have no ſuch effect: it is only by the candid

candid *few* theſe amiable qualities are reſpected: the malicious *many* ſhrink from them with diſguſt! there cannot be a crime of greater magnitude than to poſſeſs beauty, virtue, or talents of a ſuperior ſort; no mercy is to be expected from thoſe who find themſelves excelled.—Has her innocence preſerved her from ſlander? I refer you to the paragraph before me: whoever charges her with coquetry, is a ſlanderer.—Has her delicate ſuſceptible heart been *leſs* expoſed to the impoſitions of the other ſex, *becauſe* it is artleſs.—Has ſhe been treated by *them* more worthily, becauſe her nature is unſuſpicious? Has theſe virtues ſecured the conſtancy of her lovers? or will they diſentangle her from the fraudulent ſnares of her crafty relations.—I am tired of aſking myſelf queſtions, all of which might be anſwered in one monoſyllable—No.

Miſs Forteſcue has not given me the trouble of ſending her back to Windſor; but her aunt and couſins have taken her off

off my hands;—I underſtand ſhe is to ſpend ſome weeks with them; never was there a greater revolution than *this*—ſhe really is not ſo deſerving as I once thought or it would never have happened:—the haughty Marchioneſs was not the ſort of woman to receive into her houſe an indigent relation; or the Lady Langtons to appear with a couſin who had pretenſions to beauty, though none to fortune, without ſufficient cauſe for their conceſſion: one beaten road there is to their favour, and that ſhe purſues.—To wrap her own perfections under a cloke of *nothingneſs* and *ſervility*, would be a poor ſacrifice to the attainment of this great end.—She does more! ſhe makes herſelf uſeful in demoliſhing the fame and the beauty of others, who happen to have too great a ſhare of either.

You will think me unreaſonable, my dear, if I do not tell you *why* I ſpeak with ſo much ſeverity of a girl to whom I was once ſo partial: you know my diſpoſition,

poſition, and that I can make allowances for any failure of the human mind, except ingratitude and hypocriſy. Miſs Forteſcue is both *ungrateful*, and a *hypocrite;* every incident, every confidential or common converſation paſſing in my family has been immediately conveyed to her new friends, and laid out in that purchaſe which is now completed—the liberty to ſit down at Lady Stars' table, and with Lady Stars' daughters, when ever ſhe pleaſes.—My information of her treachery came from authority; yet I would not believe it poſſible, and ſaid nothing about it: but having afterwards heard that ſhe had ſpoke ſlightingly of Miſs Montague, for whom ſhe expreſſed perfect admiration, and the warmeſt attachment, I told her what had been communicated to me, expecting ſhe would vindicate herſelf from the double charge of *perfidy* to me, and *duplicity* to Mary. Gueſs then my ſurpriſe, when ſhe replied to the *firſt*, that it was her duty to have no concealments to ſo near

near and tender a friend as her Aunt Stars; and to the *ſecond*, that truly ſhe did *think*, and might perhaps have *ſaid*, that Miſs Montague gave herſelf too many quality airs for her *preſent* ſituation.—I could not abuſe any one under my roof, or diſmiſs her from it, with the diſgrace as ſhe deſerved: I had taken her from her mother, and to her mother I wrote the next day, requeſting ſhe would come to town to receive back her daughter; pleading the Duke's indiſpoſition, and my own neceſſary attendance in Groſvenor-ſquare, as the reaſon why I could not hope to make my houſe any longer an agreeable reſidence to Miſs Forteſcue.—Her anſwer was full of acknowledgments, and ſignified that her daughter wiſhed to accept of a very preſſing invitation to paſs a few weeks with her Aunt Stars, for whoſe *unexpected* attention ſhe ſhould always conſider herſelf indebted to my goodneſs, and to the honour, as well as the particular advantage

tage of being permitted to remain ſo long under my protection.

Having read the letter through, I gave it to the impertinent girl, who looked it careleſsly over, as if it had come from ſome body much her inferior:—when ſhe came to the three or four laſt lines, ſhe had the grace to bluſh; but whether it was called up by her *mother*'s gratitude, or her *own* ingratitude, I am not accountable—ſhe condeſcended, however, to add *ſomething* to the civil ſide of the queſtion; ſo that we did not part altogether as *enemies*, though we ſhall never again meet as *friends*.

I ſhall now dread the coming in of every poſt—I ſhall dread to open my next letters from Riverſdale: ſuch plans as infernals alone could have ſet on foot are ſeldom protracted;—the ſooner their ſcene of villany is cloſed, the better will it be for dear Lady Auberry: evils which are unremediable, once admitted, ſoon grow familiar; and we contemplate them ſo often, till at laſt

laſt we make them good for ſomething; but when only advancing to take up their abode with us, and when ſuſpenſe creeps on before, the preparations we make for their reception are terrible.—This, deareſt Anna, is exactly the ſituation of your truly affectionate Aunt,

J. PETWORTH.

LETTER

LETTER XLV.

Sir Aſhton Montague to Lord Auberry.

Bath, April 30, 17—

My Lord,

I HAVE the honour to addreſs your Lordſhip merely as a man of buſineſs; the title of *friend* muſt remain doubtful, till I hear from you; long ſilence is doomed incompatible with *my* notions of friendſhip, whatever it may be with your own; however, we will ſettle that matter another time.

My preſent intention is not to trouble your Lordſhip with advice, but to give you information.

Our

Our affairs are completed, as I expected they would be, without law and without trouble. I go in a few days to take poſſeſſion; we muſt make up a purſe between us of five thouſand for *honeſt* Solemn; but as my ſhare of the property is undoubtedly the largeſt, I ſhall take on myſelf to ſatisfy the demands of all the underſtrappers. *Boden* and *Simmons* are well ſatisfied with my liberality; there are *many* more to whom I muſt come down handſomely; I ſhall think it well, if double the ſum I have propoſed for *Andrew*, brings me off with the others.

He did not return from Riverſdale till laſt night, and too late for the poſt, or I ſhould have given you inſtant information of our ſucceſs. The reaſon *why* the demand has not been made *ſooner*, I am going to explain.—My private expedition to ——ſhire had taken air, and our viſit to the old woman's cottage reached the ears of Lady Auberry's attorney.—The Bodens, half ſcared out of their ſenſes at a

menacing viſit from a curſed lawyer, daſhed off a brace of affidavits, and, knowing where to find me, came away to relate the lucky circumſtance. I immediately ſent expreſs for Solemn, who, on hearing the whole matter, thought there would be danger, till theſe people were ſmuggled out of the kingdom. "It was poſſible, (he "ſaid) that if the enemy was to make "another application, the man or his wife "might be found in a more *compliable* "diſpoſition:" remarking, with his uſual wiſdom, "It was no proof, that thoſe who "had *once* ſtood, would *never* fall."

Sound doctrine this! I had nothing to oppoſe againſt it, but the difficulty of holding out any inducement ſtrong enough to make them accept of *voluntary* baniſhment.

Andrew ſoon convinced me how eaſy it was for *him* to accompliſh whatever he undertakes.

Entre vous.—Boden's wife is the greateſt fool in nature, and muſt have betrayed us merely

merely by her folly, if the devil himſelf had not preſided over our ſafety.

Johnſon works in the ſame vineyard with our friend Solemn; one ſows, and the other reaps. Johnſon has large poſſeſſions in our Weſtern Iſlands, and Andrew applied to his fellow labourer, who, at his inſtigation, very good-naturedly wanted a notable ſteward to reſide on his plantations; which ſtewardſhip came to the offer of the Bodens, with ſo many advantages annexed; beſides a conſiderable annuity granted by me on their joint lives, forfeited only by their returning to Britain; that they graſped at it, as a man would catch at the end of a rope thrown into the water to ſave him from drowning.

Thus, my Lord, we have cleared our hands, not only of two heavy incumbrances, but dangerous *confederates:* laſt Friday they ſailed out of the river, and if they go to the bottom, it will not be without my full conſent, and perfect approbation.

Solemn's next ſtep, after ſeeing them ſafe on board, was to the town of ——, three Miles from Riverſdale, from whence he ſent a note to the Dowager Counteſs, requeſting ſhe would appoint at what hour the next day he might have the honour of attending her Ladyſhip, and receiving her commands, regarding the buſineſs on which ſhe had before been conſulted; a verbal anſwer was all that he received, ſignifying, her lawyer would be with him the following morning at twelve, to which hour he was punctual. After a good deal of converſation on the buſineſs, with which it is not material to trouble your Lordſhip, the matter was finally adjuſted in *our* favour; Lady Mary Pledell's fortune, with accumulated intereſt, ſince the late Earl's deceaſe, is refunded to you, and makes the round ſum of thirty thouſand. Now, my Lord, as you have thoughtleſsly ſworn not to touch this money, becauſe it is Miſs Montague herſelf, and not her money, that you want to ſecure

cure, I think you can do no better than to throw the lump of dirty droſs into the lap of your ſiſter.—I ſhould have ſome repugnance in adviſing you to this act of generoſity, if I ſaw much proſpect of having my devoirs accepted; but my ſucceſs there is ſo very doubtful, that neither you, or my conſcience, can accuſe me of a ſelfiſh conſideration.

How imperceptibly a man falls into old habits, and old opinions newly renounced. I began with doubting your friendſhip, and I am ending, as if I never had doubted it.—I thought I would not adviſe you to any act again as long as I lived, and I have been perſuading you to perform an act of brotherly kindneſs, the merit of which your own enlarged heart muſt have pointed out to you before.—Now that I have broke down the bars between us, and that my confidence in you does not blow from a freezing corner, I can tell you ſome news, that will make you fall down at my feet, and worſhip me as your titular ſaint:

know then, that the charm by which you was bound, is diſſolved, and Miſs Montague, if you pleaſe, may now be your own. Aſk me not *how* this matter has been effected—it is effected, and you are free.

Are your eyes yet open? Do you now ſee the thouſand advantages which I have been ſlaving to obtain for you? May I break my neck when next I ſet my foot in the ſtirrup, and go headlong to the devil, if all my contrivances have not been to ſerve you more than myſelf—that Mary, in whom your ſoul is wrapped, could never have been your's, Auberry, but for the diligence I have exerted to get you diſentangled from the other affair:—ſhe could not have been your's, if I had not diſengaged her from the management of my family eſtates:—ſhe could not have been your's, if I had not eaſed her of high birth, as well as brilliant fortune; it is the ſurface that dangles the ſenſes; and whilſt ſhe conſidered herſelf the heireſs of wealth, and allied to nobility, I'll be rot if ſhe would

would have turned her face to any man in the world, who had firſt ſlighted, next forſaken, and laſt of all inſulted her: but, by my management, you will find her in another humour. Mary, the daughter of *nobody*, owned by *nobody*, ſlighted by *every* body, without a ſhilling to ſave her from ſtarvation, ſhe will be too much honoured in the revived addreſſes of Lord Auberry, to raiſe up romantic, fantaſtical objections, in oppoſition to her own intereſt;—no, the thing is as good as done. What wrongs will ſhe have to complain of? None—your rank enobles her, and your fortune is ſufficient to make all your children princes and princeſſes, if you ſhould have a hundred of them.—Go to, then—never tell me that *you* or *I*, or *Solemn*, or any of us, have wronged her. We only *humble* to *exalt* her, and make her *ſtoop* that ſhe may *conquer*.

If ſhe reproaches you with cruelty, merely explain to her that it has proceeded from *rooted* affection; and if ſhe had

ſuffered

ſuffered martyrdom in the cauſe, yet, for the motive ſake, ſhe would not only forgive, but love you the better, for having inflicted the puniſhment.—It is always ſo, when we give the women leave to date our errors from their own liſt of captivating attractions: perhaps, at firſt, ſhe may give you a little trouble in huſhing her ſobs, and drying her tears; regard them not as ſymptoms of diſfavour—the very beſt of females love the oſtentation of grief, and think it a ſort of virtue to wear the livery of affliction.

This is the very laſt time you muſt expect to hear from me, till I am honoured with your Lordſhip's notice; *three* letters is debt enough even from an *Earl* to a *Commoner*. I ſhall not increaſe your obligation, by adding another to the number: in truth, dear Auberry, though mortified, I am not angry; being now, and at all times, your faithful and affectionate ſervant,

ASHTON MONTAGUE.

LETTER

LETTER XLVI.

Lady Auberry to Lady Jane Petworth.

May 1, 17—

I HAVE heard of profeſſional men, ſo tender-hearted, as to faint in the performance of an operation, and who even give up practice rather than amputate a limb. Such timid practitioners may be their *own* friends, but they certainly are not the *friends* of ſociety. What would become of all the diſeaſed, if thoſe who *could* give them relief were to run away, leaving them to periſh, rather than ſtay and face the momentary pain that muſt precede the cure.

I have

I have heard of friends too, who, in the hour of trouble, will paſs by the door of the unfortunate; becauſe, forſooth, they cannot bear to ſee thoſe they love in any ſort of diſtreſs: how little do all theſe tender-hearted people conſider the inhumanity that lurks under this erroneous maſk of ſympathy!

You will aſk me, What is the meaning of all this preamble?—I mean it as a ſort of tribute to that true ſpirit of ſenſibility, that bleſſed philanthropy, which diſtinguiſhes my *beſt* friend, and the beſt friend of my gentle Mary.

The time is come, when I call upon you to amputate from her mind all the gay expectations that have hitherto grown with her growth, and ſtrengthened with her ſtrength; the inciſion once made, I appoint you to pour on her bleeding wounds the balſam of kindneſs, the oil of comfort, and the honey of friendſhip—it is by this regimen alone that the gangrene of mortification can be prevented.

I have

I have done ſomething for the dear child myſelf in this way, which I know will contribute to her pacification. I incloſe my letter, that you might deliver it to her, when you think it good time.

Solemn, the poliſhed abetter of all this miſchief, the agent of *plunderers* and *depredators*, has been down again, and wanted a ſecond interview with me. I wonder what my heart was about, that it gave me no ſcratches, when he came here the firſt time.

Before his return I made up my mind to my grievances; there was no foundation for contention, and I reſolved to ſubmit my cauſe to Heaven, yielding quietly to the demands of a traitorous conſpiracy; and my attorney was inſtructed accordingly, when I ſent him to meet Mr. Solemn, chooſing to give up my claim to the honour of his perſonal attendance on myſelf.

They were ſome hours together, and the reſult of their meeting was, that the

Montague

Montague eſtates were reſigned to Sir Aſhton, and all her mother's money, which is funded in the Bank, transferred to Lord Auberry.

I have heard a ſtory of an old lady being ſtopped by highwaymen, who, well pleaſed with the contents of her purſe, demanded no more: but when they were out of ſight, remembering ſhe had on her finger a ring of value, which eſcaped their obſervation, a footman was diſpatched after the plunderers, that ſhe might have the pleaſure of preſenting it to them.

I did very like it, only that mine was an act of deliberation; her's of confuſion—their agent would have made, in the name of his employers, a ſort of compromiſe, reſpecting the arrears; but my ſoul ſpurned at the thoughts of any thing like a negociation with barbarians; and when my own lawyer brought me the propoſal, I ſent him back again to inſiſt on their taking the whole.

There

There is one thing that I have not yet ſet before you—the wretch, who is ſtarving, will pick up ſcraps from the dung-hill; ſo I pick up ſome poor comfort in this *laſt* unwholeſome morſel, which I now invite you to partake with me.

The greateſt trouble I have known in my ſhort torturing trial, ſince the confederacy has been revealed to me, proceeded from that part of it, which I thought muſt inevitably ſtigmatize the reputation of my angel daughter; however, it has pleaſed God to put it into the heads of our ruffian perſecutors, to ſay that Mary is not allied to them, or to me, but is an impoſture, who, I have reared up to cheat my huſband's family.

Theſe were not exactly the words in which the inſinuating Mr. Solemn advanced the pretty fabricated tale; yet the meaning is what I tell you.

So it ſeems I am nothing to Mary; it is a comical idea, that I ſhould be nothing to Mary Montague.—Wretches! I defy

them to take from us our *honour*, our *peace*, our *affection*, or our *relationſhip*. I have already told you, and it is true, I am more conſoled than afflicted, at this new manœuvre:—my Daughter's name eſcapes unſullied, and my Grand-daughter is not leſs my Grand-daughter; becauſe they, whoſe breath would raiſe a bliſter on the face of truth, *ſay* that *ſhe* is not.

Mr. Solemn ſeems never to be off his guard, or I ſhould have ſuppoſed it an unguarded declaration, when he averred to Harvey, there were proofs that Miſs Montague was not the daughter of Lady Mary.—He called theſe proofs, I think, a *ſtatement of facts*; which ſtatement of facts was lodged in his hands, and properly authenticated. Alas! poor Truth, where art thou all this time, that ſo many ſort of facts are made out without thy ſignature?—There can be little doubt, comparing the cottage adventure with this circumſtance of proofs in their poſſeſſion, how theſe proofs were obtained?—Well, God for-

give

give them, I do not pray for their happineſs in this world; puniſhment muſt come, and ſure it is better to wiſh it may be tranſient than eternal—write to me ſoon, I beſeech you; and tell me how that dear lamb, *who is nothing to me*, ſupports the intelligence you have to communicate:—break it, if you pleaſe, to the Ducheſs; but it would be cruel to diſturb the Duke with it till he gets better; they are wonderfully good to my darling, and, as long as ſhe can be of uſe to them, I will not indulge my fondneſs, at the expence of her gratitude and my own. God bleſs you, my dear, kind friend, I have no great fortitude of my *own*, but much has been graciouſly added to my little ſtore on this trying occaſion.

Though I no longer abound in riches, I am well—thankful—not unhappy—in health tolerable; and your's, moſt affectionately,

M. AUBERRY.

P. S.